Tadabbur i Qur’ān Vol.8

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Tadabbur i Qur'ān

Vol. 8

Exegesis of

Sūrah al-Ṭūr (52) – Surah al-Jinn (72)

Amīn Aḥsan Iṣlāḥī

Rendered into English

by
Dr Shehzad Saleem

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Preface to Volume 8

Gratitude be to God that volume 7[1] of *Tadabbur-i Qur'ān* has now also been sent for printing. It is expected that before the year end, the glad tidings of its publication will reach its well-wishers. I am indebted to the publisher of the Book – my dear Majid Khawar. He also deserves praises from its readers because of multifarious problems he has published volumes 5, 6 and 7 in a very short time set in very high quality. He has also expressed the will and determination to publish the final volume 8[2] in the remaining part of this year *inshā'Allāh*. My heartfelt prayers that he succeeds in this plans and he is able to accomplish even bigger tasks. Though I am happy and contented on every decision of God; however, I do wish that before my death I am able to rejoice on seeing the whole exegesis in its published form.

Most of the material of volume 8[3] too is ready by the grace of God. Even though I have remained continuously sick and was not able to write with full concentration and attention, however I have tried to do what best I could by writing in intervals. I also was careful that whatever I wrote in the circumstances would be in accordance with the standard of the book and the readers do not feel dissatisfied that an important discussion was left deficient in any way. I have already mentioned in the preface to volume 6 that there are a lot of difficulties in the last group of *sūrahs* because of the ultimate conciseness and utter brevity found in them. However, I have finished work till Sūrah al-Ghāshiyah (88). What remains will be completed in a few months if God grants me the opportunity of life and health to do so.

Here it is appropriate to direct the attention of the readers to a mischief spread by the Orientalists to ruin its divine arrangement and format. They have published copies of the Qur'ān in which the *sūrahs* are not arranged in the manner God and His Prophet (sws) did. They have rearranged them claiming that this new arrangement is more meaningful and better arranges the Book of God and rids it of the haphazard sequence which they think it had.

A similar state of affairs is being witnessed in some Muslim countries as well as they are publishing certain copies of the Qur'ān which are not on the conventional and well known *mutawātir* reading (the reading of *Ḥafṣ*). In these copies, lesser known

1. Volume 8 as per the new arrangement. (*Translator*)
2. Volume 9 as per the new arrangement. (*Translator*)
3. Ibid.

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and *shādh* readings have also been included.

I have tried to nip these evils in their buds in this exegesis. People who will carefully read it, will *inshā'Allāh* remain protected from the mischief of the Orientalists, the Jews and extremist Shiites. The Qur'ān we have today has been arranged by God and His Prophet (sws). Like the Torah and Gospel, it is not based on history; this arrangement is based on philosophy of religion and the wisdom found in divine law. All the groups of the Qur'ān are well-knitted and linked to one another. Every *sūrah* is so deeply linked to the previous one that a slight change in its placement will create void in the meanings. While being governed by a central theme, all the verses of a *sūrah* are so closely connected to another that even if one verse is removed from its current place there is a possibility that the sequence of the whole *sūrah* will be damaged.

The issue of the variant readings too has been resolved in this exegesis. The conventional and *mutawātir* reading is the one written in this *muṣḥaf* which is in our hands today. As per this reading, the interpretation of each verse and word takes place in the light of the language of the Arabs, the context of the discourse and parallels of the Qur'ān in such a manner that no doubt remains. Thus I have interpreted every verse on the basis of this reading and I can say with full confidence that interpreting the Qur'ān on the basis of other readings is only possible at the expense of sacrificing its eloquence, purpose and wisdom.

I pray that God grant all of us the true understanding of His Book and protect us from the schemes of Satan.

wassalam

Amīn Aḥsan Iṣlāḥī
Lahore.

14th November, 1979 AD
22nd Dhū al-Ḥijjah, 1399 AH

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Tadabbur i Qur’ān

Sūrah al-Ṭūr (52)

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Sūrah al-Ṭūr

Central Theme and Relationship with the Previous *Sūrah*

This is the third *sūrah* of this group. In both the previous *sūrahs* – Qāf and al-Dhāriyāt – intellectual and historical arguments as well as those from the world within man and that out outside him are mentioned to substantiate death and the reward and punishment which will take place on the Day of Judgement. The style is general ie. it includes both reward and punishment. Consequently in Sūrah al-Dhāriyāt the following verse represents its central theme: (٥١: ٥-٦) اِنَّمَا تُوْعَدُوْنَ لَصَادِقٌ.وَّ اِنَّ الدِّيْنَ لَوَاقِعٌ (the punishment you are being threatened with is true and indeed reward and punishment shall certainly take place, (61:5-6)). While explaining these verses, I have written that they comprise both reward and punishment whether it relates to mercy or to torment. In this *sūrah*, the aspect of torment is highlighted more. Consequently, after pointing towards historical arguments as well as arguments which relate to the world around man, the Quraysh are threatened very clearly by the words: (٥٢: ٧-٨) اِنَّ عَذَابَ رَبِّكَ لَوَاقِعٌ.مَّا لَهٗ مِنْ دَافِعٍ (indeed, the punishment of your Lord is certain to come; no one shall be able to avert it, (52:7-8)). It is this threat which also occupies the status of the complement of oath and also signifies its central theme.

Analysis of the Discourse

Verses (1-16): This section forms the introductory part of the *sūrah*. The headstrong and obstinate people of Quraysh are first severely warned by citing certain historical and universal facts as evidence that the punishment which they have been threatened with is certain to come. They should not ask to hasten it and if they do not change their attitude, it will definitely alight and no one will be able to avert it. The next few verses draw a vivid picture of the Day of Judgement, with a brief description of the dreadful fate of those who had denied it.

Verses (17-28): A portrayal of the favours of the life of bliss the believers will be blessed with in contrast with that of the disbelievers is made. A special favour which is highlighted here is that the Almighty will reunite those who brought up their children in accordance with the requisites of the Hereafter with their children even if these children were not entitled to this high level as regards their own deeds. For this union, those who deserve a high rank and level will not be demoted; instead people deserving a lower rank will be promoted to a higher one. Basically, the fate of a person will be decided according to his deeds; therefore, neither a reduction will take

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place in a person's deeds nor will a faithless person be able to enter Paradise; indeed, the Almighty's blessings will be for the believers.

Verses (29-49): In the concluding part of the *sūrah*, the Prophet (sws) is comforted that he should not pay any heed to the excuses invented by the disbelievers in order to deny his prophethood. Ignoring their attitude, he should keep on discharging his duty of reminding people of the truth so that those who are mindful are able to adopt the right path and those who insist on remaining on the wrong path have no excuse but defiance to remain so.

In the twelfth verse, the attitude of the adversaries of indulging in pleasantries and toying with the truth was referred to. Here they are dealt with in detail and silenced on this behaviour.

Rebellious people are warned that very soon the time will come when all their schemes will be shattered, and before the torment of the Final Day, they will encounter another torment in this world also.

The Prophet (sws) is comforted that he should patiently await his Lord's decision, and should be aware that he is under His direct protection.

He should augment this patience through prayers, especially the night and early morning ones.

Text and Translation

Section I: Verses (1-28)

بِسۡمِ اللّٰہِ الرَّحۡمٰنِ الرَّحِیۡمِ

وَ الطُّوۡرِ ۙ﴿۱﴾ وَ کِتٰبٍ مَّسۡطُوۡرٍ ۙ﴿۲﴾ فِیۡ رَقٍّ مَّنۡشُوۡرٍ ۙ﴿۳﴾ وَّ الۡبَیۡتِ الۡمَعۡمُوۡرِ ۙ﴿۴﴾ وَ السَّقۡفِ الۡمَرۡفُوۡعِ ۙ﴿۵﴾ وَ الۡبَحۡرِ الۡمَسۡجُوۡرِ ۙ﴿۶﴾
اِنَّ عَذَابَ رَبِّکَ لَوَاقِعٌ ۙ﴿۷﴾ مَّا لَہٗ مِنۡ دَافِعٍ ۙ﴿۸﴾ یَّوۡمَ تَمُوۡرُ السَّمَآءُ مَوۡرًا ۙ﴿۹﴾ وَّ تَسِیۡرُ الۡجِبَالُ سَیۡرًا ؕ﴿۱۰﴾ فَوَیۡلٌ یَّوۡمَئِذٍ
لِّلۡمُکَذِّبِیۡنَ ۙ﴿۱۱﴾ الَّذِیۡنَ ہُمۡ فِیۡ خَوۡضٍ یَّلۡعَبُوۡنَ ؕ﴿۱۲﴾ یَوۡمَ یُدَعُّوۡنَ اِلٰی نَارِ جَہَنَّمَ دَعًّا ؕ﴿۱۳﴾ ہٰذِہِ النَّارُ الَّتِیۡ کُنۡتُمۡ بِہَا تُکَذِّبُوۡنَ
﴿۱۴﴾ اَفَسِحۡرٌ ہٰذَاۤ اَمۡ اَنۡتُمۡ لَا تُبۡصِرُوۡنَ ﴿۱۵﴾ اِصۡلَوۡہَا فَاصۡبِرُوۡۤا اَوۡ لَا تَصۡبِرُوۡا ۚ سَوَآءٌ عَلَیۡکُمۡ ؕ اِنَّمَا تُجۡزَوۡنَ مَا کُنۡتُمۡ تَعۡمَلُوۡنَ
﴿۱۶﴾ اِنَّ الۡمُتَّقِیۡنَ فِیۡ جَنّٰتٍ وَّ نَعِیۡمٍ ۙ﴿۱۷﴾ فٰکِہِیۡنَ بِمَاۤ اٰتٰىہُمۡ رَبُّہُمۡ ۚ وَ وَقٰىہُمۡ رَبُّہُمۡ عَذَابَ الۡجَحِیۡمِ ﴿۱۸﴾ کُلُوۡا وَ اشۡرَبُوۡا ہَنِیۡٓـًٔۢا بِمَا
کُنۡتُمۡ تَعۡمَلُوۡنَ ۙ﴿۱۹﴾ مُتَّکِـِٕیۡنَ عَلٰی سُرُرٍ مَّصۡفُوۡفَۃٍ ۚ وَ زَوَّجۡنٰہُمۡ بِحُوۡرٍ عِیۡنٍ ﴿۲۰﴾ وَ الَّذِیۡنَ اٰمَنُوۡا وَ اتَّبَعَتۡہُمۡ ذُرِّیَّتُہُمۡ بِاِیۡمَانٍ
اَلۡحَقۡنَا بِہِمۡ ذُرِّیَّتَہُمۡ وَ مَاۤ اَلَتۡنٰہُمۡ مِّنۡ عَمَلِہِمۡ مِّنۡ شَیۡءٍ ؕ کُلُّ امۡرِیٍٔ بِمَا کَسَبَ رَہِیۡنٌ ﴿۲۱﴾ وَ اَمۡدَدۡنٰہُمۡ بِفَاکِہَۃٍ وَّ لَحۡمٍ مِّمَّا
یَشۡتَہُوۡنَ ﴿۲۲﴾ یَتَنَازَعُوۡنَ فِیۡہَا کَاۡسًا لَّا لَغۡوٌ فِیۡہَا وَ لَا تَاۡثِیۡمٌ ﴿۲۳﴾ وَ یَطُوۡفُ عَلَیۡہِمۡ غِلۡمَانٌ لَّہُمۡ کَاَنَّہُمۡ لُؤۡلُؤٌ مَّکۡنُوۡنٌ ﴿۲۴﴾ وَ
اَقۡبَلَ بَعۡضُہُمۡ عَلٰی بَعۡضٍ یَّتَسَآءَلُوۡنَ ﴿۲۵﴾ قَالُوۡۤا اِنَّا کُنَّا قَبۡلُ فِیۡۤ اَہۡلِنَا مُشۡفِقِیۡنَ ﴿۲۶﴾ فَمَنَّ اللّٰہُ عَلَیۡنَا وَ وَقٰىنَا عَذَابَ
السَّمُوۡمِ ﴿۲۷﴾ اِنَّا کُنَّا مِنۡ قَبۡلُ نَدۡعُوۡہُ ؕ اِنَّہٗ ہُوَ الۡبَرُّ الرَّحِیۡمُ ﴿۲۸﴾

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In the name of God, the Most Gracious, the Ever Merciful.

The mount of Sinai bears witness and the scripture inscribed on a parchment unrolled. And the populated house and the lofty roof and the overflowing seas bear witness that indeed the punishment of your Lord is certain to come. No one shall be able to avert it. (1-8)

Remember the Day when the sky will totter and reel, and the mountains will fly hither and thither. Therefore, woe, on that Day, be to the deniers, who, toying around, engage in pleasantries. The Day when they shall be shoved and driven towards the Fire of Hell: This is the Hell you had been denying. Is this magic or are you blind? Enter into it. Whether you bear it or not, it is alike for you. You are being rewarded with what you had been doing. (9-16)

Indeed, the righteous shall be in gardens and bliss, enjoying what their Lord would have granted them and enjoying the fact that their Lord has preserved them from the torment of Hell-fire. Eat and drink with relish as reward for the deeds you have done. They will be reclining on thrones arranged in rows and We would have wed them with large eyed houris. (17-20)

And those who had accepted faith, and their children had followed them in their faith, We shall unite their children with them and not even slightly diminish the reward of their deeds. Each individual shall be in pledge for his earning. And We shall continue to provide them the fruits and meat they like. Such cups of wine shall pass between them which will be free from sin and idle talk. And there shall wait upon them young boys like pearls preserved. (21-24)

They will turn towards one another asking about each other, saying: "Before this, we remained fearful about our families. So, the Almighty has been gracious to us and has delivered us from the agony of the punishment of Hell. We used to invoke only Him before. Indeed, He is the keeper of His promises, Ever-Merciful." (25-28)

Explanation

وَالطُّوْرِ ۙ﴿۱﴾[1]

The word وَ here signifies an oath and I have already explained at an appropriate place in this exegesis that in the light of the research carried out by my mentor Imām Ḥamīd al-Dīn Farāhī in his *Aqsām al-Qur'ān* most oaths mentioned in the Qur'ān are meant to substantiate a claim that is stated as a *muqsam 'alayh.* As pointed out earlier, the *muqsam 'alayh* here is the verse اِنَّ عَذَابَ رَبِّكَ لَوَاقِعٌ ۙ﴿۷﴾ (the punishment of your Lord is certain to come). Hence the oath sworn by the mount of Sinai is meant to substantiate this claim. Thus, keeping in view this aspect of the oath, I have translated the first verse as "Ṭūr bears witness" and in my opinion this translation is more meaningful.

The word Ṭūr refers to the mount of (Sinai) which has been mentioned in the Qur'ān

1. The Mount of Sinai bears witness.

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in various aspects. It is in one of its sacred valleys Ṭuwā that Moses (sws) witnessed divine disclosures while coming back from Madyan. It was here that he was blessed with prophethood and was directed to go to the Pharaoh and his people as a warner to them. He was to inform him that if he did not give up his rebellious attitude he, together with his people, would become a target of God's scourge. After the destruction of the Pharaoh, the Almighty called him to this very mountain to give him the Torah. When in his absence, his people were led astray and got involved in worshipping the calf, it was at the base of this mountain that he brought over the leaders of his people for collective repentance. On this occasion, the Almighty shook the whole mountain and informed the Israelites that if they did not abide by the covenant they were making with the Almighty by receiving His Book, they should remember that it is in His power to crush them below this very mountain.

Because of these multifarious features the mount Ṭūr is a great historical sign which substantiates this claim and is mentioned after oath. Thus, for this characteristic, it has been sworn by in Sūrah al-Tīn. I will *inshā'Allāh* explain there that this oath is sworn to substantiate the claim of reward and punishment referred to here.

Some people have regarded the word طُّوْرِ to refer to a mountain in general.[2] However, this view is not tenable for various reasons. Firstly, because the Qur'ān must be interpreted as per the conventional meanings of its words. It is possible that in the Hebrew and Syriac languages, it has this meaning; however, in Arabic, it is not commonly and conventionally used in this meaning. It is mentioned several times in the Qur'ān, and at each instance is used as a proper noun. Secondly, if it is interpreted to mean a mountain, it will bear no relationship with the *muqsam 'alayh* which is essential; otherwise the oath will be out of place.

وَكِتٰبٍ مَّسْطُوْرٍ ۙ﴿۲﴾[3]

These words refer to the Torah. An evident indication for this is that it is mentioned adjacent to the mountain Ṭūr and it is known that it was here that the Almighty gave Moses (sws) this Book. The second indication is the expression رَقٍّ مَّنْشُوْرٍ. The word رَقٍّ is used for thin parchment which was used for writing in ancient times. It is also evident from history that initially the Torah was written on clean hides which were folded up in the form of a scroll and was spread open at the time of recital. In the presence of these indications, there is no possibility that some other book be implied here. Some people have interpreted it to mean "record."[4] However, this is out of place because presenting this as evidence is only useful in the world to come and not in this world.

The relationship of these words is also very evident with the *muqsam 'alayh*. Just as

2. See, for example: Ibn Kathir, *Tafsir al-Qur'ān al-'Aẓim*, vol. 4, 240. (*Translator*)
3. And the scripture inscribed.
4. See, for example: al-Zamakhshari, *al-Kashshāf*, vol. 4, 411. (*Translator*)

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mount Ṭūr is a historical sign of the divine law of retribution, in a similar manner the Torah is a great historical record which mentions this divine law. Preserved in it are details of how nations were dealt with by God under this law. A simple reading of this law will show that this law is in force ever since the times of Adam, and this persistent pattern shows that it will continue until the time when a day arrives wherein God's justice will completely and totally manifest itself. On that day, a person who has done the slightest evil will face its punishment and a person who has done the slightest good will be recompensed.

The fact that the word كِتٰبٍ is not defined by a definite article is meant to heighten its grandeur. The reason for this is that before the Qur'ān, it was the Torah which the Almighty had revealed for the guidance of people and whose basic directives were given by God to Moses (sws) in written form. Before this, most of the guidance given by the Prophets to their people was oral in nature. It was with the Torah that writing down all the teachings of the prophets began. For this reason, it is mentioned here with great emphasis. I will explain in the exegesis of Sūrah al-Raḥmān and Sūrah al-'Alaq the various aspects of conclusively delivering the truth which as a result of this instruction by the pen have come into being.

فِيْ رَقٍّ مَّنْشُوْرٍ ۙ﴿۳﴾ [5]

The word رَقٍّ has been explained above. The fact that this Book is preserved in spread out pages is meant to convey its conclusive communication of the truth: nothing is concealed in it; everything is openly available in its spread out sheets and anyone can read it. He who cannot read it can listen to it being recited. In fact, he has the right to demand from the bearers of this Book to tell and to read out to him what is written in this Book.

Here it needs to be kept in mind that the people of Arabia would acknowledge the superiority of the People of the Book in religious matters. On this basis, the Qur'ān at many instances has directed them to ask from the People of the Book what they do not know. Moreover, it is also a fact that the Torah has also recorded the history of Abraham (sws) and Ishmael (sws) and the people of Arabia also claimed that they had inherited from these same forefathers the religion they practiced. So there is a subtle reference in this verse that they can find out from this book whether their forefathers warned them of the Day of reward and punishment or not.

The word مَنْشُوْرٍ also carries a subtle aspersion on the Jews of the times of the Prophet (sws). It is mentioned at many instances in the Qur'ān that the Jews would hide many things mentioned in their scriptures. This malady of concealing the truth developed in the Jews in their times of decadence. One of the main reasons for its development was that they did not want people to know of the predictions mentioned

5. On a parchment unrolled.

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in the Torah regarding the advent of the last Prophet (sws). In these predictions, they were threatened that if they denied this prophet, they would invite God's wrath and be deprived of their position of leadership. By mentioning this word, the Jews are reminded of the real status of the Torah: it was housed in clean and pure spread out pages so that people should read it and understand it and so that all of its pages were always displayed to people; however, because of their wretchedness they concealed the Torah. It was due to this attitude of theirs that Jesus (sws) addressed them in the following words: "You had been given a lamp so that you place it at a high place in your home so that its light spreads in the whole house but you have hidden it under a cup."[6]

وَّالۡبَيۡتِ الۡمَعۡمُوۡرِ ۙ﴿۴﴾[7]

Generally our exegetes have interpreted this expression to refer to a house in Paradise which to angels has the same status in the heavens as the one given to the Baytullah on this earth for human beings.[8] In my opinion, this view has no bearing on the meaning of this expression. If there is such a house in Paradise, then what weight does its evidence carry in favour of the claim which is presented after this oath? Since our exegetes wrongly think that oaths are always sworn by sacred objects, they try to look for some sacred element in such objects. However, in this regard, the real thing is not the sacredness of the objects of oath but the way they bear evidence on a claim. If reflected thus, one is unable to find such a relationship in this case.

Some people regard this expression to refer to the Baytullāh.[9] This view is more tenable than the first. This is because an oath is sworn on the secure city (بلد أمين) in Sūrah al-Tīn to substantiate reward and punishment and since the Baytullāh is situated in this secure city, its bearing evidence does carry a meaning. However, the context rejects this view too. The reason for this is that after this, the lofty roof is sworn by. Obviously, this cannot refer to the roof of the Baytullāh. It can only refer to the heavens and our exegetes have also interpreted it thus. If it refers to the heavens, then swearing by the heavens after swearing by the Baytullāh and then swearing by the ocean look somewhat unrelated. It does not carry the harmony and accord which exists between the oaths sworn by the mount Ṭūr and the written book.

In my opinion, the expression الۡبَيۡتِ الۡمَعۡمُوۡرِ refers to this earth extending over which is the roof of the sky. Many arguments can be presented in favour of this opinion.

Firstly, in my opinion, the expression الۡبَيۡتِ الۡمَعۡمُوۡرِ is a very apt metaphor for the earth. The Qur'ān, at many instances, has called it مهاد (eg. 78:6) and قرار (eg. 27:61) etc.

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6. I am unable to locate this quotation in the New Testament. (*Translator*)
7. And the populated house.
8. See, for example: Ibn Kathir, *Tafsir al-Qur'ān al-'Aẓim*, vol. 4, 240. (*Translator*)
9. See, for example: al-Zamakhshari, *al-Kashshāf*, vol. 4, 411. (*Translator*)

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Moreover, by referring to the earth as the floor and the sky as the roof, it has very beautifully called their combination a house.

Secondly, after its mention, a reference to the sky clearly shows that it refers to the earth. Wherever in the Qur'ān attention is directed to great signs of the Almighty, the sky and the earth are mentioned together.

Thirdly, at many places, the Qur'ān has directed our attention to the fact that the various sources and resources the Almighty has made available in this earth bear witness to the fact that man is not unaccountable for what he does in this world; he is answerable to God. The word الْمَعْمُوْرِ refers to the resources found in the earth and, as a necessary corollary of these provisions, to the accountability a person will be liable for after benefiting from these resources.

Fourthly, in Sūrah al-Dhāriyāt, the previous *sūrah*, it was said: وَ فِی الْاَرْضِ اٰیٰتٌ لِّلْمُوْقِنِیْنَ. (۲۰:۵۱) (and in the earth and yourselves also are signs for those who have conviction, (51:20)) and وَ فِی السَّمَآءِ رِزْقُكُمْ وَ مَا تُوْعَدُوْنَ. (۲۲:۵۱) (and there is in the heavens your sustenance also and that too about which you are being threatened with, (51:22)). While explaining these verses, I have alluded to the signs of the heavens and the earth which bear witness to the divine law of retribution and punishment. It is precisely on this premise that evidence is presented here too: only the style is different.

For these reasons, in my opinion, the word الْبَیْتِ refers to the earth and its qualification by the attribute الْمَعْمُوْرِ alludes to the signs and majesties of God relating to His power, wisdom and providence on the basis of which the Qur'ān at various instances has substantiated God's justice and His reward and punishment. I have explained these signs at appropriate places of this exegesis.

وَ السَّقْفِ الْمَرْفُوْعِ ۙ﴿۵﴾[10]

After the earth, presented here is the evidence of the sky. The Qur'ān, in support of its claims, generally puts forth the signs of the sky together with those of the earth. Readers are advised to look up what I have written in Sūrah al-Dhāriyāt with reference to the following verses and وَفِی السَّمَآءِ رِزْقُكُمْ وَمَا تُوْعَدُوْنَ. (۲۲:۵۱) (and there is in the heavens your sustenance also and that too about which you are being threatened with, (51:22)) and: وَ السَّمَآءِ ذَاتِ الْحُبُكِ. (۷:۵۱) (and the striped winter clouds bear witness, (51:7)). It will become evident from this how much role the sky, winds and clouds had in the destruction of nations which incurred the wrath of God.

The sky is mentioned in the Qur'ān with different attributes keeping in view the context and occasion. Here it is called the lofty roof. The word "roof" (سقْف) bears witness to the providence, graciousness and mercy of God: it is merely His grace that He has stretched this immense tent above our heads. The word "lofty" (مرفُوع) alludes to God's power, grandeur and greatness: what can be beyond the power of the being

10. And the lofty roof.

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Who is capable of erecting such a roof. The various aspects through which both these attributes of God (providence and power) bear witness to the Hereafter and to reward and punishment have been explained at several places in this exegesis.

وَالْبَحْرِ الْمَسْجُوْرِ ﴿٦﴾[11]

The verb سَجَرَ means "to become brimful." The expression سَجَرَ الرَّجُلُ التَّنُّوْر means "he filled the stove with fuel;" the expression سَجَرَ الْمَاءُ النَّهْرَ means "water became brimful in the canal."

After presenting the witness of the heavens and the earth, in this verse the biggest sign on the earth ie. the oceans are presented as witness. It should be kept in consideration that at other places in the Qur'ān also (eg. 55:10-24) after the signs of the heavens and the earth are alluded to the signs of the oceans are referred to. A reflection on these verses would reveal that man cannot count the signs of God's singularity, power, providence and retribution found in the oceans. I have elucidated these signs at several instances in this exegesis. These discussions need to be looked up. Some important aspects will *inshā'Allāh* be discussed in the exegesis of Sūrah al-Raḥmān. Here with respect to the central theme of the *sūrah* and the complement of oath, it should remain in consideration that the threatened torment after the oaths can historically be seen in the account of Noah's nation as well as in the fate of the Pharaoh. Both these nations were inflicted by an oceanic calamity the details of which are found both in the Torah and in the Qur'ān.

اِنَّ عَذَابَ رَبِّكَ لَوَاقِعٌ ﴿٧﴾ مَّا لَهٗ مِنْ دَافِعٍ ﴿٨﴾[12]

These verses state the real claim after the oaths above, and it is this claim which forms the central theme of the *sūrah* as well. In the previous *sūrah*, this very claim was stated in slightly different words: اِنَّمَا تُوْعَدُوْنَ لَصَادِقٌ.وَّ اِنَّ الدِّيْنَ لَوَاقِعٌ. (٥١:٥-٦) (indeed, the punishment you are being threatened with is true and indeed reward and punishment shall certainly take place, (51:5-6)). The only difference is that in this *sūrah* the aspect of punishment is more prominent. While explaining اِنَّمَا تُوْعَدُوْنَ لَصَادِقٌ in the previous *sūrah*, I had written that it refers to that punishment which the prophets of God warned of and that will be meted out both in this world and in the next. In this *sūrah*, the thing which was implicitly alluded to in the previous *sūrah* is elaborated upon. Elaborating upon what is stated in a concise manner first or explicitly mentioning something after its implicit mention is a very common style of the Qur'ān. Examples can be seen in the previous *sūrahs.*

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11. And the overflowing seas bear witness.

12. That indeed, the punishment of your Lord is certain to come. No one shall be able to avert it.

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While elucidating the oaths mentioned in this *sūrah*, I have explained how they bear witness to the claim the verses under discussion mention. Repetition is not needed. It is while referring to this evidence that the Prophet (sws) is addressed and told that the punishment with which he is threatening the Quraysh and which they are making fun of is bound to come; no one will be able to ward it off: neither will their own power and community be able to avert it nor will their alleged deities be able to save them; neither will any one bail them out in this world nor in the next. The Quraysh are urged to take heed from the signs mentioned in the earlier verses and told that all of them are enough to substantiate the claim. Thus what was given to Moses (sws) on mount Ṭūr, what is written in the scriptures of the Torah, the signs with which this earth is replete, the multifarious manifestations of God's power to which the blue sky bears witness and the signs which can be observed in the oceans all are sufficient to substantiate this claim. No other sign is required. If these are not able to open their eyes, nothing else will for even if they see a portion of the sky falling on to them, they will dance with glee thinking this torment to be rain-laden clouds. So much so, this calamity will destroy them and they will still not profess faith.

يَوْمَ تَمُوْرُ السَّمَآءُ مَوْرًا ۝٩ وَّتَسِيْرُ الْجِبَالُ سَيْرًا ۝١٠ فَوَيْلٌ يَّوْمَىِٕذٍ لِّلْمُكَذِّبِيْنَ ۝١١ الَّذِيْنَ هُمْ فِيْ خَوْضٍ يَّلْعَبُوْنَ ۝١٢[13]

This is a portrayal of the punishment: the sky which appears so stable, steady and strong in this world will start to reel and shake. The word مَوْر means "to move here and there uneasily and restlessly". In other words, one portion of the sky will move in one direction and the other in another one. Similarly, the mountains which are well grounded in their places will be uprooted and move uncontrollably. The implication is that when on that day this will be the condition of the sky and the mountains, what will happen to man? On that day, what use will anyone's power or community, castles and trenches be for him! Here it should be kept in mind that whenever the Quraysh were informed of an upheaval which would take place on the Day of Judgement, they would mockingly ask the Prophet (sws) about what would happen to the mountains; would they too be shattered? At another place, the Qur'ān has answered this question by asking the Prophet (sws) to inform them that his Lord will crush these mountains to pieces.

The words فَوَيْلٌ يَّوْمَىِٕذٍ لِّلْمُكَذِّبِيْنَ mean that on that Day death and perdition will be for those who are denying it today. The words الَّذِيْنَ هُمْ فِيْ خَوْضٍ يَّلْعَبُوْنَ mention a characteristic of these disbelievers which has brought the whole discourse in accordance with the situation. It thus becomes evident that it refers to the arrogant people among the Quraysh who were trying to tease and harass the Prophet (sws) and to render ineffective his warnings through their babble. Verses 29-46 ahead mentions the details.

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13. Remember the Day when the sky will totter and reel, and the mountains will fly hither and thither. Therefore, woe, on that Day, be to the deniers, who, toying around, engage in pleasantries.

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The word خَوْض means "to enter into something." The expression خاض الماء means "he entered the water." From this has originated the idiom وخاض القوم فی الحدیث. In general, this idiom means to argue and chatter to support an evil and defy a truth. It has occurred in the Qur'an in this meaning at various instances. For example: وَ خُضْتُمْ كَالَّذِیْ خَاضُوْا. (٦٩:٩) (and like them, you have engaged in idle talk, (9:69)) and فَذَرْهُمْ يَخُوْضُوْا وَ يَلْعَبُوْا حَتّٰى يُلٰقُوْا يَوْمَهُمُ الَّذِیْ يُوْعَدُوْنَ.(٨٣:٤٢) (so, let them indulge in idle talk and babbling until they face that day of theirs which they are being threatened with, (42:83)).

In spite of being convinced of something, opposing it by trying to fabricate arguments against it is a form of playful attitude with one's own intellect as well as that of one's followers. For this reason, the Qur'ān has called this attitude لَعِبٌ (play). This attitude of making fun is dangerous in all circumstances; however, it becomes dangerous to the ultimate degree if eternal loss can be its result.

The details of this خَوْض are coming up in the succeeding verses. They refer to the statements of the addressees which they utter against their conscience merely to undo the effect of the words of the Qur'ān and of the Prophet (sws) on the hearts of the people. For example, some of them would call him a soothsayer, some a poet, some a fabricator and some a bragger. Similarly, some others would claim that they too could present the discourse he was presenting. In short, to tease the Prophet (sws), each person would say anything that came to his mind. This opposing of the truth in this manner was mere entertainment to them. No one was bothered to think that this amusement could lead him and his people to eternal Hell.

يَوْمَ يُدَعُّوْنَ اِلٰى نَارِ جَهَنَّمَ دَعًّا ﴿١٣﴾ هٰذِهِ النَّارُ الَّتِیْ كُنْتُمْ بِهَا تُكَذِّبُوْنَ ﴿١٤﴾[14]

Mentioned in these verses are the calamities which such mischievous people will face on that Day. The verb دَعَّ means to push someone with full force and hatred, and later the word دَعًّا further emphasizes it. The implication is that today these people are busy in their pranks, but on that Day they will be forcefully shoved towards Hell, and it will be said to them that this was the Hell they would make fun of and reject in the previous world.

اَفَسِحْرٌ هٰذَآ اَمْ اَنْتُمْ لَا تُبْصِرُوْنَ ﴿١٥﴾[15]

They are addressed and told that when in the previous world the messenger of God would warn them of Hell, they would regard these warnings of the Qur'an to be a magic of words in order to make themselves and their masses indifferent to it. Now, they should speak up whether this is a magical spell woven by words or is it a reality. However, just as in the previous world they were blind to it, today also they are not

14. The Day when they shall be shoved and driven towards Hell: This is the Fire you had been denying.

15. Is this magic or are you blind?

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being able to see it.

اِصْلَوْهَا فَاصْبِرُوْٓا اَوْ لَا تَصْبِرُوْا ۚ سَوَآءٌ عَلَيْكُمْ ؕ اِنَّمَا تُجْزَوْنَ مَا كُنْتُمْ تَعْمَلُوْنَ ﴿۱۶﴾[16]

A divine declaration will bid them to enter Hell; there is no escape for them now. Whether they show patience or start shouting, both will be of no use to them: neither will patience save them nor shouts be able to provide relief to them. The words اِنَّمَا تُجْزَوْنَ مَا كُنْتُمْ تَعْمَلُوْنَ say that whatever they will be facing will be because of their own misdeeds. Had they been a target of an injustice and implored as a result, they should have expected their imploring to be answered; however, when their own misdeeds are shown to them, against what will they implore and from whom will they expect to receive an answer?

The words اِنَّمَا تُجْزَوْنَ مَا كُنْتُمْ تَعْمَلُوْنَ do not mean that all the deeds they did in the previous life will be shown to them in their exact form; it refers to their consequences. Whatever deed a person does in this world, whether good or bad, takes a special form before the Almighty with regard to its effects and consequences, and it is in this form that it will be shown to its doer. Though it will have a different form than the one it had when it was done in the previous world but since it will be the harvest of the crop they had sown, the words express the fact that they are receiving the return for what they had done in the previous world.

اِنَّ الْمُتَّقِيْنَ فِيْ جَنّٰتٍ وَّنَعِيْمٍ ﴿۱۷﴾[17]

In order to bring out the severity of punishment which will be inflicted on the deniers (مُكَذِّبِيْنَ), the reward given to the righteous (مُتَّقِيْنَ) is mentioned here. The style of contrast adopted here shows that by the righteous (مُتَّقِيْنَ) those people are referred to who instead of making fun of the warnings of the Prophet (sws) carefully listened to them, reflected on them and held them very dear. Such righteous indeed will dwell in gardens and in bliss.

فٰكِهِيْنَ بِمَآ اٰتٰىهُمْ رَبُّهُمْ ۚ وَوَقٰىهُمْ رَبُّهُمْ عَذَابَ الْجَحِيْمِ ﴿۱۸﴾[18]

Coming up are the details of how the righteous will enjoy the gardens and bliss they will be blessed with. The vagueness found in بِمَآ اٰتٰىهُمْ bears witness to enhanced majesty: no one can imagine today what their Lord will grant them. Its extent can only be imagined when it will actually be received and only by those who are its recipients.

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16 Enter into it. Whether you bear it or not, it is alike for you. You are being rewarded with what you were doing.

17. Indeed, the righteous shall be in gardens and bliss.

18. Enjoying what their Lord would have granted them and enjoying the fact that their Lord has preserved them from the torment of Hell-fire.

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In my opinion, the words وَوَقٰهُمْ رَبُّهُمْ are conjugated with بِمَآ اٰتٰهُمْ رَبُّهُمْ. They will enjoy the overwhelming favours of their Lord and will be particularly happy that God by His grace saved them from the torment of Hell. The word فٰكِهِيْنَ itself encompasses the meaning of joy and acknowledging favour; hence a separate word is not required for this meaning. It is evident from this verse that on the Day of Judgement the righteous will regard God's greatest favour to be saved from the Hell these rejecters are making fun of today. Every inch of their being will be grateful for this. Further ahead in this *sūrah*, this subject is discussed thus: قَالُوْٓا اِنَّا كُنَّا قَبْلُ فِيْٓ اَهْلِنَا مُشْفِقِيْنَ. فَمَنَّ اللّٰهُ عَلَيْنَا وَوَقٰىنَا عَذَابَ السَّمُوْمِ. (٢٦-٢٧) (They will say: "Before this, we remained fearful about our families. So, the Almighty has been gracious to us and has delivered us from the agony of the punishment of Hell," (26-27)).

كُلُوْا وَاشْرَبُوْا هَنِيْٓـًٔا بِمَا كُنْتُمْ تَعْمَلُوْنَ ﴿١٩﴾[19]

These people will be delivered glad tidings from their Lord that as a reward for their deeds, they can eat and drink to their heart's content. Neither will this harm them in any way nor will these favours decrease in the least, nor will they have to bear any grief for them.

The word هَنِيْٓئ is an adjective of the order of فعيل. It means something which is very suitable. Here, as an adjective, it qualifies a suppressed verbal noun. The actual sentence would be: كُلُوْا وَاشْرَبُوْا اَكْلاً وَّشُرْبًا هَنِيْئًا. Some people regard it to be an accusative of state (حال). However, this view is against grammatical principles.

مُتَّكِـِٕيْنَ عَلٰى سُرُرٍ مَّصْفُوْفَةٍ ۚ وَزَوَّجْنٰهُمْ بِحُوْرٍ عِيْنٍ ﴿٢٠﴾[20]

The word مُتَّكِـِٕيْنَ is actually an explanation of فٰكِهِيْنَ mentioned in verse eighteen. Verse nineteen is a parenthetical sentence. The implied meaning is that the righteous will be enjoying the favours of their Lord while sitting on thrones arranged in consecutive rows. Being arranged thus is a depiction of perfect decoration of their seats. Implied also is the fact that they will be mutually very dear to and frank with one another. For this reason, they will sit facing each other. At other instances, the word مُتَّقٰبِلِيْن is used to convey this meaning.

A person's enjoyment is incomplete without his wife and children. For this reason, the Almighty will bless the believers with this favour. The words used for this give us only a broad idea of these favours. Their reality and form are only known to God. It will become evident to us only in the Hereafter.

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19. Eat and drink with relish as reward for the deeds you have done.

20. They will be reclining on thrones arranged in rows and We would have wed them with large eyed houris.

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وَالَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا وَاتَّبَعَتْهُمْ ذُرِّيَّتُهُمْ بِاِيْمَانٍ اَلْحَقْنَا بِهِمْ ذُرِّيَّتَهُمْ وَمَآ اَلَتْنٰهُمْ مِّنْ عَمَلِهِمْ مِّنْ شَيْءٍ ۭ كُلُّ امْرِئٍۢ بِمَا كَسَبَ رَهِيْنٌ ﴿٢١﴾[21]

Among the many things which the Almighty will grant the believers in Paradise to perfect these favours is the news that those among their children who followed their parents in faith will be united with them there even though they might not be entitled to this with respect to their faith and deeds. For this union, the principle stated in this verse is: وَمَآ اَلَتْنٰهُمْ مِّنْ عَمَلِهِمْ مِّنْ شَيْءٍ Children having a lower level of faith will be upgraded to the status of the parents without reducing the latter's status. In other words, the parents will remain on the status to which they were entitled because of their faith and deeds; the Almighty out of His grace will raise the status of their children.

The word اِيْمَانٍ in وَاتَّبَعَتْهُمْ ذُرِّيَّتُهُمْ بِاِيْمَانٍ shows that this concession is reserved only for those children who followed their parents in professing faith. If they are devoid of faith, they will not be entitled to this concession even though they may vehemently claim to have followed the parents.

Since the word اِيْمَانٍ (faith) occurs as an undefined noun, it is evident that it has levels. If children occupy a level in Paradise reserved for the very lowest in faith, even then they will be entitled to this concession.

The words كُلُّ امْرِئٍۢ بِمَا كَسَبَ رَهِيْنٌ express God's principle of salvation: each person will be judged on his deeds. It is only his deeds that will salvage or destroy him. A person devoid of faith and good deeds will not enter Paradise by merely having an outward relationship with virtue. The Almighty will bless only those who are worthy of being blessed on the basis of their faith and deeds. Concealed in these words is a warning to both the Jews and the Idolaters of Arabia. They totally disfigured the religion of Abraham (sws) and Ishmael (sws) but still dreamt of attaining a high status in Paradise merely due to being their descendents.

Here a question may arise in someone's mind: if the real standard on the basis of which a person shall be saved in the Hereafter relates to his deeds, then how can children be elevated to a higher status belonging to their parents? The answer to this question is that this matter relates to God's graciousness which He has reserved for the faithful. It does not negate the principle mentioned in the verse كُلُّ امْرِئٍۢ بِمَا كَسَبَ رَهِيْنٌ. Indeed a person will not be salvaged in the Hereafter without faith and good deeds; however, this does not necessitate that God will not elevate the faithful. Both are separate issues and there is no contradiction between them.

The reverse can also be deduced from this verse: parents having faith and occupying a lower status in Paradise will be elevated to the status of their children entitled to a higher status to complete their joy even though the parents may not be entitled to this higher status on the basis of the extent of their faith and deeds. The reason for this

21. And those who had accepted faith, and their children had followed them in their faith, We shall unite their children with them and not diminish the reward of their deeds.

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deduction is that the affection found between parents and children is the same found between children and parents.

Here the occasion and context of the glad tidings also need consideration. If a person has true faith, the greatest worry which occupies his mind regarding his children is that the Almighty save them from the horrors of the Hereafter and protect them from the calamity of Hell. The desire that children attain worldly success if it arises in their minds is secondary in nature. Thus in the prayers made by the Prophets and the righteous for their children, success in the Hereafter is mentioned in preference and in fact regarded as the real thing. Same was the case with people who had embraced faith in the times of the Prophet (sws). When their hearts were lit up with the radiance of faith, their greatest concern about their children was not regarding their worldly future but regarding their future in the Hereafter. This concern is evident from verse 26 of this very *sūrah*: إِنَّا كُنَّا قَبْلُ فِيْٓ اَهْلِنَا مُشْفِقِيْنَ (before this, we remained fearful about our families). I will *insha'Allāh* explain in this verse that the concern referred to in the verse relates to the fact that a goat of the herd they were made a shepherd of by the Almighty should not be devoured by a wolf and in fact just as the Almighty took them out from the darkness of the age of ignorance and guided them onto the straight path, on a similar basis, their children are also blessed with faith so that they do not face the horrors of Hell. It is to assure these faithful people of His that the Almighty gave glad tidings that though the principle that no one will be salvaged on the Day of Judgement without faith and righteous deeds is strict, yet the Almighty will be further gracious to them: If their children followed them and even if they had a lower status with regard to their faith, the Almighty will reunite their children with them and for this union, He will not reduce their status; on the contrary, He will elevate the status of their children.

This verse guides us to the fact that each person should try to guide his close ones to the path of faith as much as possible. Without faith, no will succeed in the Hereafter even though he may be the progeny of a prophet or messenger of God. However, if the offspring of someone followed the path of faith and even if this faith was of the lowest level, they will be able to join their parents who occupied a higher status in Paradise due to their faith.

وَاَمْدَدْنٰهُمْ بِفَاكِهَةٍ وَّلَحْمٍ مِّمَّا يَشْتَهُوْنَ ﴿٢٢﴾[22]

The verse implies that just as the Almighty will join together their children with them in Paradise, similarly, He will provide even more of their cherished fruits and meat to them. The word اَمْدَدْنَا is pointing to the fact that with the increase in number, their provisions and sustenance will also increase.

The two words فَاكِهَة and لَحْم combine in them all the favours related to edibles whether

22. Each individual shall be in pledge for his deeds.

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they relate to basic nourishment or to added nourishment.

يَتَنَازَعُوْنَ فِيْهَا كَاْسًا لَّا لَغْوٌ فِيْهَا وَلَا تَاْثِيْمٌ ﴿٢٣﴾[23]

Mentioned in this verse are the bliss and delight which the People of Paradise will enjoy: cups of wine will be exchanged between them. The expression فِيْهَا تَنَازَعُوْا means تَعَاطُوْهَا (they will mutually extend cups of wine towards one another). Snatching and grabbing is not an essential part of this word's meaning. The word كَاْسٌ is spoken both for a utensil and what a utensil holds in itself; in other words, it comes for both wine and cups of wine.

The words لَّا لَغْوٌ فِيْهَا وَلَا تَاْثِيْمٌ imply that this wine will be free of the evil effects which are part and parcel of the wine of this world. After consuming it, a person will neither indulge in useless babble nor blame another person of some sin. The word أَثَّمَهُ تَاْثِيْمًا would mean "he blamed him of a sin." Among the evils of the wines of this world is that after being inebriated with it, a person starts insulting and blaming his adversaries and their daughters and daughters-in-law. In the age of *jāhiliyyah*, a number of family feuds would arise as a result of this. At another instance, the Qur'ān has referred to this evil by saying that through it Satan incites animosity and hatred among people. On the other hand, the wine of Paradise will spread the fragrance of love and affection. Thus the words in Sūrah a-Wāqi'ah are: لَا يَسْمَعُوْنَ فِيْهَا لَغْوًا وَّلَا تَاْثِيْمًا.اِلَّا قِيْلًا سَلٰمًا سَلٰمًا.(٥٦:٢٥-٢٦) (there they shall hear no idle talk, no sinful speech. Only greetings and congratulations everywhere, (56:25-26)).

وَيَطُوْفُ عَلَيْهِمْ غِلْمَانٌ لَّهُمْ كَاَنَّهُمْ لُؤْلُؤٌ مَّكْنُوْنٌ ﴿٢٤﴾[24]

Young boys will be present to serve them and to carry out their wishes all the time. Their purity and beauty will make them appear like pearls which were preserved in shells and have come out to serve them. The people of Arabia use the simile لُؤْلُؤٌ مَّكْنُوْنٌ to depict the ultimate elegance and finesse of something. The style of the Qur'ān shows that the Almighty will create these young boys for this purpose. Some people hold a different view; however, there is no argument to support their view. Hence, there is no need to criticize it.

وَاَقْبَلَ بَعْضُهُمْ عَلٰى بَعْضٍ يَّتَسَآءَلُوْنَ ﴿٢٥﴾[25]

After being united in Paradise, just as the passengers of a long and arduous journey

23. And We shall continue to provide them the fruits and meat they like. Such cups shall pass between them which will be free from sin and idle talk.

24. And there shall wait upon them young boys like pearls preserved.

25. They will turn towards one another asking about each other.

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inquire after one another, in a similar manner, the dwellers of Paradise will anxiously turn to each another and inquire what happened. They will ask each other how the journey was, how many gruelling inclines they had to climb, how they reached their destination and how they found their family united with them.

قَالُوْٓا اِنَّا كُنَّا قَبْلُ فِيْٓ اَهْلِنَا مُشْفِقِيْنَ ﴿٢٦﴾[26]

Those who answer will say that before this, in the previous world, they remained anxious for their family and were concerned about their fate in the same manner they were concerned about their own fate. They will express that they were never overcome with pride at the status of their family and tribe and did not think that whatever they were blessed with in that world was their right by birth by virtue of belonging to a specific tribe, and that no one could snatch it away from them. They will go on to say that they always kept the Hereafter in consideration and continued to pray to the Almighty that He raise them in the Hereafter as the leaders of the righteous and not as leaders of the defiant. They will further say that they always impressed upon their children to adhere to the prayer, pay *zakāh* and remain fearful of God and to live and die while practicing the true religion.

فَمَنَّ اللّٰهُ عَلَيْنَا وَوَقٰىنَا عَذَابَ السَّمُوْمِ ﴿٢٧﴾[27]

These words are a continuation of their speech: they will affirm that as a reward for remaining fearful and anxious, the Almighty looked upon them with favour and united their children with them in Paradise and protected them from the scorching winds of Hell. The word السَّمُوْمِ refers to "hot wind and the flame of fire." This style of speech is an ultimate expression of God's favours and blessings. The implied meaning is that God will even keep them away from hot winds not to speak of Hell.

اِنَّا كُنَّا مِنْ قَبْلُ نَدْعُوْهُ ۭ اِنَّهٗ هُوَ الْبَرُّ الرَّحِيْمُ ﴿٢٨﴾[28]

This verse is connected to verse 26 earlier: قَالُوْٓا اِنَّا كُنَّا قَبْلُ فِيْٓ اَهْلِنَا مُشْفِقِيْنَ. The implied meaning being that these people on the one hand remained among their families while remaining fearful for them and on the other beseeched God alone whether in the state of fear or hope or expectancy. Except Him, they neither invoked anyone nor associated partners with Him. The contents of verse 28 should have been placed after verse 26 above; however, to immediately express the favours and blessings of God,

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26. Saying: Before this, we remained fearful about our families.

27. So, the Almighty has been gracious to us and has delivered us from the agony of the punishment of Hell.

28. We used to invoke only Him before. Indeed, He is the keeper of His promises, Ever-Merciful.

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verse 27 was juxtaposed in between. The eloquence in deferring the words of verse 28 is that the real factor for the success of a person in the Hereafter is the belief of *tawḥīd*. A person who protected it will be worthy of God's favours and a person who distorted will doom himself. The dwellers of Paradise will express the fact that they were firmly grounded in their belief and for this reason, the Almighty looked upon them with favour.

The words اِنَّهٗ هُوَ الْبَرُّ الرَّحِيْمُ will be spoken by them to express their utter gratefulness at being blessed with such favours: the Almighty is true to His promises and very merciful for not only has He fulfilled all the promises He made to His people, He has blessed them with even more favours. I have already presented my research on the word بَرّ at a relevant place of this *tafsīr*. When this word is used as an adjective for the Almighty, it means that He will fulfil all the promises He made to His creatures. Veracity and loyalty form the spirit of this word. The word رَّحِيْمُ qualifies the fact that He not only fulfils promises, He forgives the mistakes of people and blesses them with further favours.

Section II: (Verses 29-49)

In the succeeding verses, the Prophet (sws) is encouraged: He is told that he should keep reminding people through the Qur'ān while disregarding their nonsensical talk; people who are adamant in denying him are only inviting their own doom. In this regard, in order to silence the objections of the Prophet's adversaries, answers are also given to which the word خَوْض has referred to in the previous section. These babbles are called an intrigue by the Qur'ān, and the Prophet (sws) is assured that they will not be able to harm in any way the call to the true faith; in fact, this stratagem will go against them. At the end, the Prophet (sws) is assured that the greatest of miracles will not be able to convince them. They will only be convinced on the Day of Judgement. At that time, their helplessness will become evident to them from every aspect. So the Prophet (sws) should wait for the decision of His Lord with patience and to acquire this patience as much as he can he should glorify Him as much as possible.

In the light of this background, readers may now proceed to read these verses.

Text and Translation

فَذَكِّرْ فَمَآ اَنْتَ بِنِعْمَتِ رَبِّكَ بِكَاهِنٍ وَّلَا مَجْنُوْنٍ ﴿٢٩﴾ اَمْ يَقُوْلُوْنَ شَاعِرٌ نَّتَرَبَّصُ بِهٖ رَيْبَ الْمَنُوْنِ ﴿٣٠﴾ قُلْ تَرَبَّصُوْا فَاِنِّيْ
مَعَكُمْ مِّنَ الْمُتَرَبِّصِيْنَ ﴿٣١﴾ اَمْ تَاْمُرُهُمْ اَحْلَامُهُمْ بِهٰذَآ اَمْ هُمْ قَوْمٌ طَاغُوْنَ ﴿٣٢﴾ اَمْ يَقُوْلُوْنَ تَقَوَّلَهٗ ۚ بَلْ لَّا يُؤْمِنُوْنَ ﴿٣٣﴾
فَلْيَاْتُوْا بِحَدِيْثٍ مِّثْلِهٖٓ اِنْ كَانُوْا صٰدِقِيْنَ ﴿٣٤﴾ اَمْ خُلِقُوْا مِنْ غَيْرِ شَيْءٍ اَمْ هُمُ الْخٰلِقُوْنَ ﴿٣٥﴾ اَمْ خَلَقُوا السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضَ ۚ
بَلْ لَّا يُوْقِنُوْنَ ﴿٣٦﴾ اَمْ عِنْدَهُمْ خَزَآئِنُ رَبِّكَ اَمْ هُمُ الْمُصَيْطِرُوْنَ ﴿٣٧﴾ اَمْ لَهُمْ سُلَّمٌ يَّسْتَمِعُوْنَ فِيْهِ ۚ فَلْيَاْتِ مُسْتَمِعُهُمْ

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بِسُلْطٰنٍ مُّبِيْنٍ ﴿٣٨﴾ اَمْ لَهُ الْبَنٰتُ وَ لَكُمُ الْبَنُوْنَ ﴿٣٩﴾ اَمْ تَسْـَٔلُهُمْ اَجْرًا فَهُمْ مِّنْ مَّغْرَمٍ مُّثْقَلُوْنَ ﴿٤٠﴾ اَمْ عِنْدَهُمُ الْغَيْبُ
فَهُمْ يَكْتُبُوْنَ ﴿٤١﴾ اَمْ يُرِيْدُوْنَ كَيْدًا ؕ فَالَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا هُمُ الْمَكِيْدُوْنَ ﴿٤٢﴾ اَمْ لَهُمْ اِلٰهٌ غَيْرُ اللّٰهِ ؕ سُبْحٰنَ اللّٰهِ عَمَّا يُشْرِكُوْنَ ﴿٤٣﴾ وَ
اِنْ يَّرَوْا كِسْفًا مِّنَ السَّمَآءِ سَاقِطًا يَّقُوْلُوْا سَحَابٌ مَّرْكُوْمٌ ﴿٤٤﴾ فَذَرْهُمْ حَتّٰى يُلٰقُوْا يَوْمَهُمُ الَّذِيْ فِيْهِ يُصْعَقُوْنَ ﴿٤٥﴾ يَوْمَ لَا
يُغْنِيْ عَنْهُمْ كَيْدُهُمْ شَيْـًٔا وَّ لَا هُمْ يُنْصَرُوْنَ ﴿٤٦﴾ وَ اِنَّ لِلَّذِيْنَ ظَلَمُوْا عَذَابًا دُوْنَ ذٰلِكَ وَ لٰكِنَّ اَكْثَرَهُمْ لَا يَعْلَمُوْنَ ﴿٤٧﴾ وَ اصْبِرْ
لِحُكْمِ رَبِّكَ فَاِنَّكَ بِاَعْيُنِنَا وَ سَبِّحْ بِحَمْدِ رَبِّكَ حِيْنَ تَقُوْمُ ﴿٤٨﴾ وَ مِنَ الَّيْلِ فَسَبِّحْهُ وَ اِدْبَارَ النُّجُوْمِ ﴿٤٩﴾

Therefore, keep reminding. By the grace of your Lord you are no soothsayer or one possessed. Do they say that he is a poet for whom we await an adverse turn of fortune? Tell them: "Wait and I shall also wait with you." Does their intellect prompt them to say this or are they a people rebellious? Do they say that he himself has concocted the Qur'ān? In fact, they do not want to accept faith. Then let them produce a scripture like it, if they are truthful. (29-34)

Have they been created without any creator or are they their own creators? Have they created the heavens and the earth? In fact, they do not have conviction. (35-36)

Do they alone have the treasures of your Lord or are in charge of them? Do they have a ladder climbing which they overhear the secrets of the heavens? If this is so, then let their listener bring a clear proof. Is it that He has daughters whilst you have sons? (37-39)

Do you ask a reward from them that they are burdened with its penalty? Do they have knowledge of the Unseen; thus they write it down themselves? Do they intend to contrive a plot? Then they should remember that those who have disbelieved shall themselves be trapped in it. Do they have a deity besides God? Exalted is God above what they associate with Him. (40-43)

And even if they see a fragment of the heavens falling down they would say: "A heap of clouds." So, leave them alone till they encounter their Day when they shall stand taken aback. The Day when their guiles will be of no avail to them, nor will they be helped. (44-46)

And for these wrongdoers, there is another punishment besides this but most of them know it not. And wait patiently for your Lord's decree. Indeed, you are before Our eyes. And glorify your Lord and praise Him when you rise and glorify Him in the night also and at the declining of the stars too. (47-49)

Explanation

فَذَكِّرْ فَمَآ اَنْتَ بِنِعْمَتِ رَبِّكَ بِكَاهِنٍ وَّ لَا مَجْنُوْنٍ ﴿٢٩﴾[29]

The word ف shows that the succeeding verse is a corollary of what has been

29. Therefore, keep reminding. By the grace of your Lord you are no soothsayer or one possessed.

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mentioned earlier. The Qur'ānic warning about the punishment is substantiated in the previous verses. After that, the Prophet (sws) is addressed to assure him that he should continue to do whatever he is doing to remind them. He should not care about the allegations and reproaches of the enemy. If they call him a soothsayer or a mad man, then let them utter such nonsense. With the grace of His Lord, he is neither a soothsayer nor a man possessed.

The words بِنِعْمَتِ رَبِّكَ actually provide an argument: it is not that the blessings and favours of God he enjoys are something which cannot be seen by others. What relationship do the words of wisdom and cognizance he utters on behalf of God have with the nonsensical utterances of the soothsayers? Do the soothsayers possess even a tiny speck of the character he has? He is a perfect embodiment of truth and righteousness whereas the soothsayers are liars and cheats. He receives from the Holy Spirit while the soothsayers eavesdrop to hear inspirations from the devils and in this too they make a false display. Similarly, those who call him an insane person are insane themselves. Who else can be more sane, vigilant and wise than him?

This allegation on the Prophet (sws) by his adversaries was totally against the calls of their conscience; for this reason, there was no need to present many arguments for its refutation. Its unfounded nature was absolutely evident on those who were making these allegations. They would make up such things only to fool their masses. I have explained all the essential aspects of this behaviour in the exegesis of Sūrah al-Shu'arā'. Readers may look it up.

اَمۡ يَقُوۡلُوۡنَ شَاعِرٌ نَّتَرَبَّصُ بِهٖ رَيۡبَ الۡمَنُوۡنِ ﴿۳۰﴾ قُلۡ تَرَبَّصُوۡا فَاِنِّىۡ مَعَكُمۡ مِّنَ الۡمُتَرَبِّصِيۡنَ ﴿۳۱﴾[30]

This is the answer to their second allegation: they regard the Prophet (sws) to be a poet and hope that just as many poets presented their compositions and then became part of the past, the vicissitudes of time will one day destroy him too; if such people are waiting for this to happen, then the Prophet (sws) should tell them that they can keep on waiting and that he will wait too for the warnings he is sounding them to materialize or see whether what they are dreaming of comes true.

If the adversaries of the Prophet (sws) called him a poet, then, as I have explained at many places in this exegesis, the reason for this was not that they in fact regarded him to be a poet; they would do this to reduce the effect caused by the potent and eloquent style of the Qur'ān on the hearts of people as a result of which they were being overawed and were being led to believe in its divinity. These people wanted to assure the masses that the force found in the Qur'ān was the same as the one found in the compositions of their poets; hence, they should not consider it to be divine and live in the fear of a promised doom nor should they lose hope in their ancestral religion; just

30. Do they say: that he is a poet for whom we await an adverse turn of fortune? Tell them: "Wait and I shall also wait with you."

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as their own poets became very famous in their times but their fame as well as their poetry was lost to posterity, similarly, for some time this person's (the Prophet's) eloquence and articulacy will cause a stir; but soon this rise will have a fall.

The words قُلْ تَرَبَّصُوْا فَاِنِّيْ مَعَكُمْ مِّنَ الْمُتَرَبِّصِيْنَ say that if these people are waiting for it, then the Prophet (sws) should tell them to wait as well and that he too is waiting to see whether their foolish desire is fulfilled or what the Almighty is threatening them with materializes.

The word الْمَنُوْنِ means الدَّهْر (time). There is an idiom دَارَ عَلَيْهِم الْمَنُوْن which means "he became prey to the misfortunes of time." The expression رَيْبَ الْمَنُوْنِ means the "mishaps of time."

The Qur'ān has refuted this allegation of the adversaries in detail in Sūrah al-Shu'arā'. In that *sūrah*, the Qur'ān has presented a certain criteria on the basis of which every sensible person can decide whether the Qur'ān and its presenter can be compared with poetry and poets. I have tried to elaborate upon all of its aspects there.

اَمْ تَاْمُرُهُمْ اَحْلَامُهُمْ بِهٰذَآ اَمْ هُمْ قَوْمٌ طَاغُوْنَ ﴿۳۲﴾[31]

There are only two options: either their intellect is guiding them not to regard the Prophet (sws) as God-sent and to regard him as a soothsayer, poet or mad person or that these people because of their haughtiness are not willing to accept what he is calling them to and thus are finding excuses for this rejection. The implication is that the first of these options is very unlikely. How can a sensible person regard the Prophet (sws) who is an embodiment of veracity, truthfulness, sensibility and seriousness and who is wise, dedicated to his cause, a true believer and submitter to God to be a mad person or a poet? If a person is audacious enough to make such claims, it only means that he is devoid of any sense. In other words, it is their haughtiness which is inducing them to say such things; their intellect has no role in it.

اَمْ يَقُوْلُوْنَ تَقَوَّلَهٗ ۚ بَلْ لَّا يُؤْمِنُوْنَ ﴿۳۳﴾ فَلْيَاْتُوْا بِحَدِيْثٍ مِّثْلِهٖٓ اِنْ كَانُوْا صٰدِقِيْنَ ﴿۳۴﴾[32]

Mentioned here is another of their allegations and its answer: they say that the Prophet (sws) has fabricated the Qur'ān and to falsely claim the status of prophethood, he says that it has been revealed by the Almighty through His angel. The verb تَقَوَّلَ means to falsely accuse someone. At other instances, the expression is used to convey this meaning is بَلِ افْتَرَاهُ. In other words, their opinion is that though the Prophet (sws) has fabricated this Book yet to deceive the masses it is claimed that it is from God.

The words بَلْ لَّا يُؤْمِنُوْنَ express the reality: this allegation of theirs is also against the call of their conscience. They are fully certain that the Prophet (sws) has not authored

31. Does their intellect prompt them to say this or are they a people rebellious?

32. Do they say that he himself has concocted the Qur'ān? In fact, they do not want to accept faith. Then let them produce a scripture like it, if they are truthful.

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this book; they know full well that such a discourse can neither be produced by him nor by anyone else; however, they do not want to profess faith in it; for this reason in order to hide their crime they are making such lame excuses. In my opinion, the verb here expresses intention. Several examples of such usage have been indicated earlier on in this exegesis.

The words فَلْيَاْتُوْا بِحَدِيْثٍ مِّثْلِهٖٓ اِنْ كَانُوْا صٰدِقِيْنَ challenge them in response to their allegation: if they really think that this Book has been produced by the Prophet (sws), then they should produce such a discourse from the poets and orators of the past or even sit together themselves and produce something in response.

It should be kept in consideration that the Qur'ān has given this answer in response to the Quraysh and it was totally befitting for this occasion; however, this challenge stands even today. The rejecters of the Qur'ān have neither been able to produce something like it from their literary and religious treasures of the past nor have they produced something similar themselves nor did anything come to the forefront in later history which can be called an answer to this challenge. For non-Arabian nations, this challenge is not direct; however, they too can test their mettle and see whether they can bring forth something of this calibre or not. It must also be kept in consideration that this challenge of the Qur'ān is not just from one aspect; it is an over all challenge as a scripture of guidance. It is possible that a nation claims that there is no poet or orator of the calibre of their own poets or orators; however, in the first place, this claim is debatable because another nation can make this claim in favour of its literati. However, even if this claim is accepted it can, at best, be an acknowledgement of its superiority in one skill which no one can present as an evidence for him being a prophet nor can anyone accept him as a prophet or a messenger on this basis.

اَمْ خُلِقُوْا مِنْ غَيْرِ شَيْءٍ اَمْ هُمُ الْخٰلِقُوْنَ ﴿٣٥﴾ اَمْ خَلَقُوا السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضَ ۚ بَلْ لَّا يُوْقِنُوْنَ ﴿٣٦﴾[33]

After answering the allegations and objections of the disbelievers, a few questions are raised: if they do not believe in the Hereafter or in divine punishment, they should speak up and say whether they have been created without a creator or whether they are their own creators. They should, moreover, tell whether they have created the heavens and the earth?

It should be kept in consideration that the Idolaters of Arabia regarded God to be their creator as well as that of the heavens and the earth. By posing this question to them, the Qur'ān has in fact asked them that if they regard God Almighty to be their own creator as well as that of the heavens and the earth, then why do they consider His punishment and His Day of reward and punishment to be improbable? Do they think that after creating them once, the Almighty is not capable of creating them again? If this is what they think, then this is outright foolishness. If someone can

33. Have they been created without any creator or are they their own creators. Have they created the heavens and the earth? In fact, they do not have conviction.

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create them the first time, he is all the more capable of creating them again.

Similarly, they should also think that when they are not their own creators and in fact someone else has created them who has also arranged for their livelihood and sustenance, then is it possible that He let them go scot-free and never ask them one day whether they fulfilled the objective for which He created them?

On these very grounds, they should also reflect on the fact that they have neither created the heavens below which they live nor the earth above which they live – the heavens and the earth and the blessings found in them and between them they benefit from. So, do they not owe any obligation to Him who has created them and will not they be held accountable for their attitude in the house He has built for them?

Similarly, they should also reflect on the fact that when neither the earth has been created by them nor the heavens, then on what backing have they become fearless of the Creator of the heavens and the earth? He can shake and jolt the earth whenever He wants to and they will be totally ravaged. Also, whenever He wants, He can unleash on them tempestuous winds, hailstorms and hurl stones on them and totally destroy them in the blink of an eye.

The word بَلْ لَّا يُوْقِنُوْنَ unveil the real reason behind their evasion and rejection: they do accept and acknowledge all the principal factors which necessitate the advent of the Hereafter and the reward and punishment that will take place on that Day and do not dare to negate any of these; however, at the same time, they do not believe that they are worthy of divine punishment and that if they do not mend their ways, they will, one day be afflicted by it. Here the object of the verb يُوْقِنُوْنَ which could be بالآخرة or بالعذاب is suppressed because of clear contextual indications.

I have been explaining at various places in this exegesis that the Quraysh were not absolute rejecters of the Hereafter; they regarded it to be improbable. They believed that the Day of Judgment and the reward and punishment which would take place on that Day was a mere folk tale, and secondly, if there was some truth in it, then it was so far off that they did not need to worry about it. Thirdly, if ever it came, the intercession of their deities would protect them from God's punishment. Similarly, they also did not believe in the worldly punishment which the Qur'ān was warning them of if they rejected the truth. They regarded their existing status of affluence to be an argument in support of the veracity of their beliefs and deeds. They reckoned that if they really deserved punishment as per the opinion of the Prophet (sws) and his companions, why were they more affluent and resourceful in this world than the Prophet (sws) and his companions? The situation should have been totally the opposite.

If one reflects on this mental state of theirs, one can conclude that this primarily is a state of disbelief. There was no option for them to run away from the reality. All premises which necessitated it were known and substantiated and the Qur'ān had also recounted these to them. However, since accepting them was against their desire, they would try to look ignorant. They were not convinced fully that such an incident would take place one day.

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Further reflection will also reveal the fact that just as the Quraysh were afflicted with this ailment of disbelief, in a similar manner, many Muslims today are afflicted with it. These Muslims do not reject the Hereafter and its reward and punishment; however, their lives bear witness to the fact that they do not have conviction in these things. If this lack of conviction on their part is analyzed, one can see that they too have been misled by similar notions as the idolaters of Arabia were.

اَمۡ عِنۡدَهُمۡ خَزَآئِنُ رَبِّكَ اَمۡ هُمُ الۡمُصَيۡطِرُوۡنَ ﴿۳۷﴾[34]

A question similar to the one posed in the previous two verses is posed here: if they are not the Creators of the heavens and the earth, are they the owners of the treasures of the Prophet's Lord or are they wholly solely in charge of them so that they need not worry about God's grasp? The implication is that just as they cannot claim to be the Creators of the heavens and the earth, they also cannot claim that the Almighty has given His treasures of sustenance and favours in their custody or has deputed them on their distribution so that they can withhold them from whomever they want to. Moreover, why do they think in their conceit that they cannot be seized by God or that they will not be deprived of the luxuries they are enjoying in this world or in the Hereafter? If ever it comes, who can deprive them of these luxuries? The Qur'ān at various places has referred to this vanity of the Quraysh and other affluent people of previous nations in that they regarded their affluence to be their birthright and for this reason they showed indifference to the warnings of the Prophet (sws). It is this devilish notion of theirs which is refuted: when they are neither the owners of God's treasures nor are deputed on their distribution, why are they in this craze? Whenever God wants, He can strip them of this affluence in the blink of an eye and grant it to those whom they do not regard to be its worthy recipients.

This point has been asserted in the Qur'ān by addressing the arrogant among the Quraysh who would object that if God was to send a human being as His messenger, then He would have selected some rich person of Makkah or Ṭā'if and not a poor and destitute person like Muḥammad (sws). They would similarly contend that had the religion he was calling them to been of divine origin, the Almighty would have selected them to be its bearers and not the poverty-stricken, the penniless and the slaves who did not possess worldly favours or respect. This verse also effectively refutes this haughtiness of these arrogant people.

اَمۡ لَهُمۡ سُلَّمٌ يَّسۡتَمِعُوۡنَ فِيۡهِ ۚ فَلۡيَاۡتِ مُسۡتَمِعُهُمۡ بِسُلۡطٰنٍ مُّبِيۡنٍ ﴿۳۸﴾[35]

The implied meaning of this verse is: what is the basis of their thinking that they

34. Do they alone have the treasures of your Lord or are in charge of them?

35. Do they have a ladder climbing which they overhear the secrets of heaven? If this is so, then let their listener bring a clear proof.

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will continue to enjoy the luxuries of life in this world and if ever the Hereafter comes, they will remain superior to others? Do they have a ladder which they can climb and on it listen to God's decisions in their favour? Is some other Book revealed to them in which all their desires and wishes are written? Has the Almighty given them His written acquittal so that they can indulge in whatever mischief they want to and He will neither hold them accountable in this world nor in the Hereafter? If such a piece of information has been divulged to them by a divine informer, they should present clear evidence in support of it.

Here what is stated has been stated rather concisely. Sūrah al-Qalam comprehensively deals with this subject. I have interpreted this verse in the light of Sūrah al-Qalam. Therefore, cited below are its relevant verses to dispel the notion that while interpreting this verse I have gone to needless lengths:

اَمۡ لَكُمۡ كِتٰبٌ فِيۡهِ تَدۡرُسُوۡنَ. اِنَّ لَكُمۡ فِيۡهِ لَمَا تَخَيَّرُوۡنَ. اَمۡ لَكُمۡ اَيۡمَانٌ عَلَيۡنَا بَالِغَةٌ اِلٰى يَوۡمِ الۡقِيٰمَةِ ۙ اِنَّ لَكُمۡ لَمَا تَحۡكُمُوۡنَ. سَلۡهُمۡ اَيُّهُمۡ بِذٰلِكَ زَعِيۡمٌ. (٦٨:٣٧-٤٠)

Have you a scripture in which you read that you will have whatever you desire? Or have you oaths with Us binding till the Day of Judgement that you will have what you yourselves ordain? Ask if any of them will take responsibility of this? (68:37-40)

In the verse under discussion, as per linguistic principles, there are a few instances of ellipses. If they are unveiled the whole discourse would be something to the effect: أم لهم سلم منصوب إلى السماء يسمعون صاعدين فيه (do they have a ladder which is resting again the sky climbing which they can eavesdrop). It is evident from this that man, for his guidance, needs divine revelation. Now either every person should provide evidence that he has the means to receive divine revelation. And if every person cannot make this claim and obviously he cannot, then it is incumbent upon him to trust the guidance of those who have these means.

اَمۡ لَهُ الۡبَنٰتُ وَلَكُمُ الۡبَنُوۡنَ ﴿۳۹﴾[36]

The implication of this verse is that if none of the options mentioned above is the case, then is their conceit based on their intercessors in that they are their protectors not only in this world but also in the Hereafter? If this is the case, then to bring to light the baselessness of their claim only this much is enough that they contend daughters for God whereas they themselves like sons and hate daughters. In other words, if they were not led to reflect on the fact that no one can be God's associate or partner, then at least in keeping with an obvious requirement of human nature they should not have

36. Is it that He has daughters whilst you have sons?

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liked a thing for God which they disliked for themselves. However, they were guilty of compound foolishness: in the first place, they imputed partners to God without having any grounds to do so, and in the second place whatever they associated with God they did not like to be associated to them.

It needs to be kept in mind that to the idolaters of Arabia, the highest status was occupied by three deities whom they thought to be beloved daughters of God and who could convince Him to do whatever they wanted. In Sūrah al-Najm, the forthcoming *sūrah*, they are mentioned in detail in the following words:

اَفَرَءَيْتُمُ اللّٰتَ وَالْعُزّٰى. وَمَنٰوةَ الثَّالِثَةَ الْاُخْرٰى. اَلَكُمُ الذَّكَرُ وَلَهُ الْاُنْثٰى. تِلْكَ اِذًا قِسْمَةٌ ضِيْزٰى. اِنْ هِىَ اِلَّآ اَسْمَآءٌ سَمَّيْتُمُوْهَآ اَنْتُمْ وَاٰبَآؤُكُمْ مَّآ اَنْزَلَ اللّٰهُ بِهَا مِنْ سُلْطٰنٍ ؕ اِنْ يَّتَّبِعُوْنَ اِلَّا الظَّنَّ وَمَا تَهْوَى الْاَنْفُسُ ۚ وَلَقَدْ جَآءَهُمْ مِّنْ رَّبِّهِمُ الْهُدٰى. (۵۳:۱۹-۲۳)

Have you ever pondered over Lāt and 'Uzzā and the third Manāt which is next in rank below them? For your own selves you like sons and for Him daughters! This indeed is a division unjust! They are but names which you and your fathers have invented in whose favour the Almighty has revealed no argument. They follow vain conjectures and the whims of their own souls, even though there has already come to them a manifest guidance from their Lord. (53: 19-23)

اَمْ تَسْـَٔلُهُمْ اَجْرًا فَهُمْ مِّنْ مَّغْرَمٍ مُّثْقَلُوْنَ ۝[37]

Wonder is expressed here at their abhorrence for the truth: why do not they listen to the Prophet? After all, he is not asking them for any remuneration to listen to him and they are not being burdened by the amount. He is distributing the favours of His Lord free of cost. So why is it that they are not even ready to listen to him?

It needs to be kept in mind that knowledge instead of ignorance is after all a cherished thing. No upright person tolerates and nor should he tolerate the attitude that when something of which he has no knowledge is presented to him he is unwilling to listen to it. A person who tolerates such things can be compared to a blind person who is stumbling about but when someone tries to show him the way he shakes off his hand. The Arabs were *ummī* (not conversant with the *sharī'ah*). As a result, they should have been seekers of God's guidance particularly when, from the time of Ishmael (sws), they had been hearing the tradition that God would raise a prophet among them who would bring people into light from darkness and from whom all nations of the world would receive guidance. It was incumbent upon them that when a person from within them called them to the way of God, they paid heed to him and seriously reflected on what he said. However, contrary to this expectation, they adopted the opposite attitude. It is on this state of affairs that the Qur'ān has expressed

37. Do you ask a reward from them that they are burdened with its penalty?

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amazement.

اَمۡ عِنۡدَهُمُ الۡغَيۡبُ فَهُمۡ يَكۡتُبُوۡنَ ﴿۴۱﴾[38]

They were very abhorrent of the Prophet (sws) and the guidance he had presented to them; so, did they have any means of knowing the matters of the unseen from which they were able to find out all necessary information and write it down? Obviously, they had no such means. In this situation, it was only befitting that they lunge forward to grab the guidance he was providing them because he was guiding them, through divine revelation, to God's directives and to what He would like human beings to do to please Him. However, they are showing their disgust and had concocted themselves a *sharī'ah*: it was totally based on their desires and fancies but they regarded it be the religion revealed to them by God. While referring to such fancies of theirs, the following verse of Sūrah al-Najm says: (۳۵:۵۳) .اَعِنۡدَهٗ عِلۡمُ الۡغَيۡبِ فَهُوَ يَرٰى (has he the knowledge of the Unseen; thus he is seeing it, (53:35)). The verse under discussion alludes to people who were devoid of faith and virtuous deeds but claimed that since they were the progeny of nobles, they would be blessed with a high status in Paradise. This vanity made them make fun of the Prophet's warnings and they would remark that he was threatening them with torment whereas very soon the tide of time would destroy him and that they were waiting for this time.

اَمۡ يُرِيۡدُوۡنَ كَيۡدًا ؕ فَالَّذِيۡنَ كَفَرُوۡا هُمُ الۡمَكِيۡدُوۡنَ ﴿۴۲﴾[39]

The reality is unfolded here in the form of a question: all their lame excuses and arguments were only a veil. The fact is that they were foreseeing an end to their leadership with the expansion of the Prophet's message. To save it, they would concoct things against their conscience and spread them so that the masses were not influenced by the message and break away from them. The verse asks if they want to contrive a plot; if this is so, then those who disbelieve should remember that that they themselves will be caught in their own plot.

The implication is that those who have evaded the truth and led people away from it contrive schemes against their conscience, they cause no harm to those who are calling them to the truth; they only ruin their own selves. The path to salvation and success is only the one which the Almighty has revealed through his prophets and messengers. If a person adopts a different path then, in order to prove his own misguidance to be guidance, all the arguments he fashions in support of his flawed way and all the allegations he invents against those who are calling to the true path

38. Do they have knowledge of the Unseen; thus they write it down themselves?

39. Do they intend to make a move? Then they should remember that those who have disbelieved shall themselves be trapped in it.

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will still not be able to save him. When he encounters his fate, it will become evident to him that he reached this destination because of his own schemes and contrivances.

اَمۡ لَهُمۡ اِلٰهٌ غَيۡرُ اللّٰهِ ؕ سُبۡحٰنَ اللّٰهِ عَمَّا يُشۡرِكُوۡنَ ﴿۴۳﴾[40]

The implied meaning of this verse is that in the end all have to come to God's presence. So who will save them from the consequences of the schemes they are contriving against Him? Do they think that they have some other gods besides God who will help them? If this is so, then they should remember that God Almighty is above and beyond the partners they are ascribing to Him.

The argument سُبۡحٰنَ اللّٰهِ عَمَّا يُشۡرِكُوۡنَ which the words carry has been explained at a relevant place in this exegesis: no attribute can be ascribed to God which is against His established and acknowledged attributes. The Almighty has mentioned His own attributes. The Idolaters of Arabia too believed in them yet at the same time they indulged in certain polytheistic practices in order to make their whims and innovations a part of religion. These practices actually refute the basic attributes of God. It is to this reality that the above quoted words of the verse point: God is above all the polytheistic ascriptions they make to Him. Such baseless things have no relation to His exalted and superior being.

وَاِنۡ يَّرَوۡا كِسۡفًا مِّنَ السَّمَآءِ سَاقِطًا يَّقُوۡلُوۡا سَحَابٌ مَّرۡكُوۡمٌ ﴿۴۴﴾[41]

An assurance is sounded here to the Prophet (sws) that all their silly talk and lame excuses are actually contrivances and deception and it is not possible for him to satisfy them. To convince them through reasoning is not possible at all for even if they see the punishment he is warning them of descend from the sky, they will regard it to be clouds stacked in layers and will satisfy their own selves by saying that these clouds of mercy will irrigate their crops and orchards.

This sentence is also a subtle reference to the incident that took place with regard to the Thamūd. When the punishment they had been warned of hovered over them, even then they did not believe it but reassured themselves by saying: هٰذَا عَارِضٌ مُّمۡطِرُنَا. (۲٤:٤٦) (this is a cloud that will bring us rain, (46:24)). The implied meaning is that on similar grounds these people too will not believe in the punishment even after they see it looming near. They will only believe it when the punishment ravages them but at that time believing or not will be inconsequential.

It is evident from this discussion that one can only try to convince a person as long as one thinks that he has some doubts and objections in his mind which are hindering

40. Do they have a deity besides God? Exalted is God above what they associate with Him.

41. And even if they see a fragment of the heavens falling down they would say: "A heap of clouds."

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his acceptance of the truth. Till that time, it is the obligation of a true preacher to try and dispel these doubts and objections. However, once it becomes evident that the person is actually conniving and contriving in the garb of reasoning and he actually wants to escape the reality by hiding behind its veil, then it is absolutely useless to waste time on him. His matter should be entrusted to God alone.

فَذَرْهُمْ حَتّٰى يُلٰقُوْا يَوْمَهُمُ الَّذِيْ فِيْهِ يُصْعَقُوْنَ ﴿٤٥﴾ يَوْمَ لَا يُغْنِيْ عَنْهُمْ كَيْدُهُمْ شَيْـًٔا وَّلَا هُمْ يُنْصَرُوْنَ ﴿٤٦﴾[42]

The implication of this verse is that when it has become evident that these people are only plotting and contriving, there is no need to go after them. They should be entrusted to the Day on which the trumpet of Raphael shall knock everyone unconscious. The reference is to the Day which is portrayed thus in Sūrah al-Ḥajj: وَتَرَى النَّاسَ سُكٰرٰى وَمَا هُمْ بِسُكٰرٰى وَلٰكِنَّ عَذَابَ اللّٰهِ شَدِيْدٌ. (۲۲:۲) (and you shall see mankind reeling like drunkards although not drunk: such shall be the horror of God's torment, (22:2)).

The words يَوْمَ لَا يُغْنِيْ عَنْهُمْ كَيْدُهُمْ شَيْـًٔا وَّلَا هُمْ يُنْصَرُوْنَ say that on that day neither will their plots and schemes be of any use to them nor will any of their supporters and companions be able to help them. Similarly, their alleged deities and intercessors will be of no avail to them. Everyone will have to face God alone and He will show them all that they had been doing

وَاِنَّ لِلَّذِيْنَ ظَلَمُوْا عَذَابًا دُوْنَ ذٰلِكَ وَلٰكِنَّ اَكْثَرَهُمْ لَا يَعْلَمُوْنَ ﴿٤٧﴾[43]

The implication of this verse is that there is the punishment of the Hereafter for these wrong-doers; however, before that they will face another one but few of them know of it. This is a reference to the worldly punishment which as per a divine practice was necessarily faced by the people who denied their respective messengers and became adamant on this denial. I have explained this divine practice at various places in this exegesis. This punishment also visited the rejecters of the Quraysh and all of them were humiliated and routed in the life time of the Prophet (sws).

وَاصْبِرْ لِحُكْمِ رَبِّكَ فَاِنَّكَ بِاَعْيُنِنَا وَسَبِّحْ بِحَمْدِ رَبِّكَ حِيْنَ تَقُوْمُ ﴿٤٨﴾ وَمِنَ الَّيْلِ فَسَبِّحْهُ وَاِدْبَارَ النُّجُوْمِ ﴿٤٩﴾[44]

A directive is given here to the Prophet (sws) in a very affectionate manner to show patience and to wait and at the same time to try to plan to acquire patience.

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42. So leave them alone till they encounter their Day when they shall stand taken aback. The Day when their guiles will be of no avail to them, nor will they be helped.

43. And for these wrongdoers, there is another punishment besides this but most of them know it not.

44. And wait patiently for your Lord's decree. Indeed, you are before Our eyes. And glorify your Lord and praise Him when you rise and glorify Him in the night also and at the declining of the stars too.

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In the expression وَاصْبِرْ لِحُكْمِ رَبِّكَ the letter لِ after صبر is an indication of the fact that the word patience also encompasses the meaning of waiting. The implied meaning is that he should wait for the decision of his Lord with perseverance. The decision referred to here by the word حُكْم relates to points mentioned above.

The sentence فَإِنَّكَ بِأَعْيُنِنَا is couched in great affection and love. It means that the Prophet (sws) is always in the eyes of God which implies that he is always under His protection. They can contrive whatever schemes they want to; but they cannot harm him in the slightest way.

The words وَ سَبِّحْ بِحَمْدِ رَبِّكَ حِيْنَ تَقُوْمُ inform the Prophet (sws) of the way through which he can acquire patience: he should be as diligent as he can in prayer, in particular the *tahajjud* prayer. I have explained the meaning of حِيْنَ تَقُوْمُ in the following verse of Sūrah al-Shu'arā':(٢٦: ٢١٧-٢١٨) وَ تَوَكَّلْ عَلَى الْعَزِيْزِ الرَّحِيْمِ.الَّذِىْ يَرٰىكَ حِيْنَ تَقُوْمُ. (put your trust in the Mighty One, the Merciful, who observes you when you arise, (26:217-218)). Similarly, how the word حَمْد qualifies تسبیح has also been explained at a relevant place in this exegesis.

With slight variation, the words وَمِنَ الَّيْلِ فَسَبِّحْهُ وَ اِدْبَارَ النُّجُوْمِ also occur thus in Sūrah Qāf: فَاصْبِرْ عَلٰى مَا يَقُوْلُوْنَ وَ سَبِّحْ بِحَمْدِ رَبِّكَ قَبْلَ طُلُوْعِ الشَّمْسِ وَ قَبْلَ الْغُرُوْبِ.وَمِنَ الَّيْلِ فَسَبِّحْهُ وَ اَدْبَارَ السُّجُوْدِ. (٥٠: ٣٩-٤٠) (so, bear then, with patience what they say and glorify your Lord celebrating His praises and blessings before the rising of the sun and before setting, and glorify Him in the night also, and also after the times of the sun's descent, (50:39-40)). Its exegesis can be looked up there. Repeating it here will only add to the bulk.

By the grace of God, I come to the end of this *sūrah's* exegesis. فَالْحَمْدُ لِلّٰهِ عَلٰى ذٰلِكَ (so gratitude be to God on this).

Raḥmānābād,
15th May, 1977 AD
16th Jamādī al-Awwal 1397 AH

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Tadabbur i Qur’ān

Sūrah al-Najm (53)

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Sūrah al-Najm

Central Theme and Relationship with Previous *Sūrah*

This *sūrah* is the counterpart of Sūrah al-Ṭūr, the previous *sūrah*. The central theme of both *sūrahs* is the same: substantiation of reward and punishment. The only difference is that in the previous *sūrah* the aspect of torment is highlighted and in this one the concept of false intercession with which the Idolaters of Arabia were inflicted is refuted. The reason for this, as I have explained in the previous *sūrahs*, is that in the presence of this false belief threatening them with the greatest of punishments was of no avail. For this very reason, the Qur'ān has always mentioned *tawḥīd* and the Hereafter side by side so that the iolaters are not able to find any escape route. This reality is alluded to in the previous *sūrahs* while in this *sūrah* it is explained in detail. In other words, the common subject of both *sūrahs* is that the punishment of God is bound to come to the rejecters. They are relying on the intercession of their deities; in the first place, they are not a reality; they are mere names which they have invented and if they have some truth about them then the Almighty will deal with His people with perfect justice and fairness. There is no possibility that on that day the intercession of someone may add to His information or change His decision or turn falsehood into truth.

Besides the subject and central theme, a deliberation on the concluding verses of the previous *sūrah* and the opening verses of this *sūrah* will reveal very clear harmony between the two. The last verse of Sūrah al-Ṭūr: وَ مِنَ الَّيۡلِ فَسَبِّحۡهُ وَ اِدۡبَارَ النُّجُوۡمِ very aptly dovetails into the opening verse of this *sūrah*: وَالنَّجۡمِ اِذَا هَوٰی. Such a link is found in most places in the Qur'ān – at some places, this link is between the words, at others between the meanings implied and at still others on both counts. I have alluded to such linkages in the previous *sūrah.*

Analysis of the Discourse

Verses (1-18): In this introductory part, it has been elaborated that the Qur'an which is being recited to them is not the work of a soothsayer or a fortune-teller; the Almighty Himself has revealed it to the Prophet (sws) through His most trusted and dependable angel. All its verses are based on the truth and what is stated in them is inevitable; there is not the slightest chance of any misguidance or falsehood in them. No one should have the misconception that the observations and experiences the Prophet (sws) is presenting about divine revelation and Gabriel are mere illusions or

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hallucinations. These observations are absolutely true and it is in the interest of its opponents to profess faith in the Prophet (sws) instead of showing hostility.

Verses (19-28): The Idolaters of Makkah have been warned that their false idols, on the basis of which they are denying the warnings of the Qur'ān, are nothing but a creation of their fancy and have no reality. They are but names which they have invented; neither has the Almighty ever sanctioned their existence nor can sense and reason, instinct or intellect accept them. These are merely frivolous conjectures that they are following, even though there has come to them manifest guidance from their Lord; they must bear in mind that conjectures and suppositions cannot take the place of truth, and false wishes and desires have no basis. They shall not encounter what they desire and shall only encounter the facts about which they are being warned. Hence, they must prepare themselves to face them. They must remember that all the matters of this world and the Hereafter are under the control of the Almighty and no one can interfere in them. There are many angels in the heavens whose intercession shall be of no benefit to anyone. The Almighty alone shall give permission to intercede to whom He wants and for whom He chooses. Therefore, the myth of regarding the angels the daughters of God and seeking refuge from the law of retribution and accountability in the Hereafter by baselessly supposing that they shall intercede for them is mere fanciful thinking on their part and shall certainly not be of any benefit to them.

Verses (29-32): The Prophet (sws) has been solaced that he should turn away from the slaves to this world who are showing indifference to the Message of God and to leave them to themselves. This is the farthest limit of their knowledge and they have no awareness about the Hereafter. God best knows those who have strayed from His path and those who are rightly guided and He shall give each person his due. Whatever is in the heavens and the earth is under the sole jurisdiction of God and no one whosoever can save the evildoers from His punishment nor deprive the righteous of their reward. Only those shall be rewarded in the Hereafter who used to abstain from heinous sins and open indecencies and only indulged in occasional but minor sins to which they were induced, but never insisted on them because indeed the Almighty is vast in mercy; He shall forgive them. As far as those proud and rebellious people are concerned who, on the basis of their race and creed and on the false pretext of intercession reckon that they shall be granted a high place in the Hereafter, they must not regard themselves to be too pious; the Almighty has knowledge of all their stages of creation and is also aware of their deeds.

Verses (33-55): People who do not even have the spirit to spend in the path of the Almighty or make sacrifices and who vainly reckon that since they are the progeny of two great prophets – Abraham (sws) and Moses (sws) – are by birth entitled to Paradise are severely condemned on this attitude. Their attention is directed to the teachings and sacrifices of these prophets that their high rank and status are because of the unprecedented sacrifices they gave fpr the cause of God and not because of their

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race or creed. A person's own deeds shall benefit him and they shall be of no use to others.

In this regard, it has also been emphatically explained that God alone gives comfort and pain, life and death, daughter and son, wealth and prosperity; therefore, a person should always attach oneself to the Almighty. Nations who remain indifferent to the Message of God and get deeply involved in worldly pleasures, in spite of their wealth and grandeur, meet the fate similar to the one met by the 'Ād and the Thamūd. Their remains still exist and everyone should learn a lesson from them.

Verses (56-62): This concluding section of the *sūrah* refers to what had been stated in the beginning: the Quran is not the work of fortune-tellers or soothsayers but, like previous heavenly scriptures, is another Reminder. Now the threatened hour is nigh and it is giving its opponents a timely warning. If they still do not take heed, no one shall be able to save them from God. They should not express surprise and wonder at the reality of which this Reminder is warning them and should reform themselves. They should not laugh at it; in fact, its consequences are so grave that they should take it very seriously. They must pay heed and prostrate themselves in front of the Almighty.

Section I: (Verses 1-18)

Text and Translation

بِسۡمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحۡمٰنِ الرَّحِيۡمِ

وَالنَّجۡمِ اِذَا هَوٰى ۙ﴿۱﴾ مَا ضَلَّ صَاحِبُكُمۡ وَمَا غَوٰى ۚ﴿۲﴾ وَمَا يَنۡطِقُ عَنِ الۡهَوٰى ؕ﴿۳﴾ اِنۡ هُوَ اِلَّا وَحۡىٌ يُّوۡحٰى ۙ﴿۴﴾ عَلَّمَهٗ شَدِيۡدُ الۡقُوٰى ۙ﴿۵﴾ ذُوۡ مِرَّةٍ ؕ فَاسۡتَوٰى ۙ﴿۶﴾ وَهُوَ بِالۡاُفُقِ الۡاَعۡلٰى ؕ﴿۷﴾ ثُمَّ دَنَا فَتَدَلّٰى ۙ﴿۸﴾ فَكَانَ قَابَ قَوۡسَيۡنِ اَوۡ اَدۡنٰى ۚ﴿۹﴾ فَاَوۡحٰۤى اِلٰى عَبۡدِهٖ مَاۤ اَوۡحٰى ؕ﴿۱۰﴾ مَا كَذَبَ الۡفُؤَادُ مَا رَاٰى ؕ﴿۱۱﴾ اَفَتُمٰرُوۡنَهٗ عَلٰى مَا يَرٰى ﴿۱۲﴾ وَلَقَدۡ رَاٰهُ نَزۡلَةً اُخۡرٰى ۙ﴿۱۳﴾ عِنۡدَ سِدۡرَةِ الۡمُنۡتَهٰى ۚ﴿۱۴﴾ عِنۡدَهَا جَنَّةُ الۡمَاۡوٰى ؕ﴿۱۵﴾ اِذۡ يَغۡشَى السِّدۡرَةَ مَا يَغۡشٰى ۙ﴿۱۶﴾ مَا زَاغَ الۡبَصَرُ وَمَا طَغٰى ؕ﴿۱۷﴾ لَقَدۡ رَاٰى مِنۡ اٰيٰتِ رَبِّهِ الۡكُبۡرٰى ؕ﴿۱۸﴾

In the name of God, the Most-Gracious, the Ever-Merciful.

The stars, when they fall, bear witness that your companion is neither lost nor has gone astray. And he does not speak out of his own fancy. This is but a revelation sent down to him. He was taught by an angel, mighty in power, towering in character, endued with wisdom. He appeared while he stood poised, being on the highest horizon. Then he drew near and came down within two bows' length or even closer. The Almighty then revealed to His servant that which He revealed. His heart did not deny his vision. So will you then quarrel with him over what he is seeing? (1-12)

And he beheld him once again near the farthest lote-tree, close to which is the

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Garden of Repose, when the lote-tree was being covered with that which was covering it. His sight did not falter nor lost its poise. He saw his Lord's great signs. (13-18)

Explanation

وَالنَّجْمِ اِذَا هَوٰى ۙ[1]

Most exegetes are of the opinion that the word النَّجْمِ (star) here connotes the star cluster: Pleiades.[2] However, there is no intrinsic or extrinsic contextual indication for this. A more evident indication could have been the Sirius star mentioned later in the *sūrah*. However, there is no occasion to regard it to be implied either, as will be explained later. In my opinion, it may connote genre and category the way it does in وَ بِالنَّجْمِ هُمْ يَهْتَدُوْنَ (١٦:١٦) (and by the stars they are guided, (16:16)) and وَّالنَّجْمُ وَالشَّجَرُ يَسْجُدٰنِ. (٦:٥٥) (and the stars and the trees also bow down in adoration (55:6)) as well as is many similar verses of the Qur'ān.

The verb هوی یهوی primarily means "falling of something from above." This word is appropriate if used to connote the setting of stars and their vanishing from the horizon as well for the bombardment of meteors from the stars on the devils who try to eavesdrop on the news of the unseen (*ghayb*), as has been mentioned at several places in the Qur'ān.

The letter وَ in وَالنَّجْمِ is to signify an oath and I have explained at a number of places in this exegesis that such oaths are meant to bear witness over a premise.

مَا ضَلَّ صَاحِبُكُمْ وَمَا غَوٰى ۚ وَمَا يَنْطِقُ عَنِ الْهَوٰى ۚ اِنْ هُوَ اِلَّا وَحْيٌ يُّوْحٰى ۙ[3]

These verses form the complement of oath (*muqsam 'alayh*). By swearing on the falling and setting of stars, the Quraysh are addressed and told that their companion (the Prophet Muḥammad (sws)) is neither lost nor has gone astray. Whatever he is reciting out to them is not from his own fancy; it is revealed to him from God so that it can be recited out to them for their guidance.

The occasion of the discourse bears evidence that this is a refutation of the allegation of soothsaying which the Quraysh made on him. When he used to read out the Qur'ān to the leaders of the Quraysh and also relate to them his experiences of the angel Gabriel and of divine revelations, they would try to convince their masses that he too is a soothsayer and an astrologer like their own soothsayers and astrologers. They would allege that just as after observing the meeting place and various zones of the stars and after receiving inspiration from the jinn, these soothsayers produce a poetical cum prosaic discourse and inform people of the matters of the unseen, in a

1. The stars, when they fall.

2. See, for example: Ibn Kathir, *Tafsir al-Qur'ān al-'Aẓim*, vol. 4, 247. (*Translator*)

3. Bear witness that your companion is neither lost nor has gone astray. And he does not speak out of his own fancy. This is but a revelation sent down to him.

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similar manner he too produces a similar discourse and claims to know matters belonging to the future. They would further allege that his claim that an angel of God brings revelations to them is totally false and that just as the jinn give inspirations to their soothsayers, in a similar manner some jinn gives inspirations to him and he regards this jinn to be an angel.

This allegation of the Quraysh has been refuted at a number of places in the Qur'ān. In particular, some of its very important aspects are discussed at the end of Sūrah al-Shu'arā'. Here, in this verse, this allegation is refuted from another angle which begins with the falling and setting of the stars.

By citing the falling and setting of the stars, the Qur'ān has refuted the beliefs of the Arabs which related to their soothsayers and astrologers with regard to two aspects.

Firstly, the sun, the moon and all other heavenly bodies do not have absolute authority nor can per se cast positive and negative influence; they are all subservient to God and are obedient to His commands. The manner in which they, with great precision and punctuality, rise and set as per an ordained timetable bears witness that they themselves do not have any power or authority and thus are neither worthy of being worshipped nor being regarded as the fountainhead of divine revelation and inspiration and thus be sought help from. This also shows that they should not be regarded as the source of calamities nor be beseeched for help to avoid them. Similarly, they should also not be regarded as the source of blessings nor be implored to grant them. The fact is that all these heavenly bodies prostrate before God and through this practice of theirs invite God's servants that they too serve God only and prostrate before Him alone. This topic though has been mentioned in the Qur'ān in various styles, however, the final word in this regard is the dialogue Abraham (sws) employed to conclusively convey the truth to his people.

Here it needs to be kept in mind that soothsaying thrived and prospered because of its relationship with the jinn and devils, it also had deep links with the movement of the stars and the influence this movement cast. The Qur'ān has refuted this belief by saying وَالنَّجۡمِ اِذَا هَوٰی: Stars by their very practice bear witness that they are subservient to the Creator of this universe. It is at His behest that they rise and at His bidding that they set; so foolish are the people who try to receive divine inspiration from them or try to find out the future through them; even more foolish are the people who call the messengers of God astrologers and soothsayers even though all the teachings of these messengers strongly refutes their baseless practices.

Secondly, to refute the claim of the soothsayers that they have connections with such jinn as inform them of divine matters; they have no such access. The jinn and the devils who eavesdrop in the heavens in order to listen to such matters are pelted by meteors to shoo them away. The Almighty has made this special arrangement for this purpose. In Sūrah al-Ṣāffāt, the words are:

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اِلَّا مَنۡ خَطِفَ الۡخَطۡفَةَ فَاَتۡبَعَهٗ شِهَابٌ ثَاقِبٌ.(۳۷:۱۰)

Except one who tries to snatch [some words] will be pursued by a burning meteor. (37:10)

The jinn themselves have confessed to this arrangement made by the Almighty in the following words:

وَّاَنَّا كُنَّا نَقۡعُدُ مِنۡهَا مَقَاعِدَ لِلسَّمۡعِ ؕ فَمَنۡ يَّسۡتَمِعِ الۡاٰنَ يَجِدۡ لَهٗ شِهَابًا رَّصَدًا. (۷۲:۹)

And we deeply observed the heavens and found it filled with stern guards and darting meteors. (72:9)

It is by referring to these meteors in Sūrah al-Wāqi'ah (56:75-78), Sūrah al-Ḥāqqah (69:38-43) and Sūrah al-Takwīr (82:15-25), the Almighty has regarded the Qur'ān to be absolutely devoid of Satanic interference, and has explained that no jinn or devil has access to the Qur'ān. If any of them tries to reach it, he is pelted with shooting stars. Devils can neither reach the guarded tablet in which the Qur'ān is preserved nor influence the majestic angel who descends with it nor can lead astray the messenger to whom it is revealed. Devils come into contact with only those soothsayers who are worthless liars and wretches and in order to deceive people put up a false display and claim to have access to divine matters.

Once this relationship between the oath and its complement is understood, it is essential to fully grasp the words and meanings of these verses so that the whole discourse is completely understood.

The word ضَلَّ generally occurs for such error of a person as is a result of forgetfulness or because of an unintentional intellectual mistake while غَوٰی relates to that error which is also a result of a person's base desires and intentional planning.

The word صَاحِب here is used for the Prophet (sws) and the addressed pronoun is for the Quraysh. They are told that the Prophet (sws) is their very close companion and not a stranger to them. They very well know his past and present as well as his character and conduct and his tastes and inclination. Have they ever seen any urge in him that could raise the doubt in their mind that he has a proclivity for astrology and soothsaying? If a person has such a proclivity, it does not remain hidden for the whole of his life from close companions. However, it is very strange that what they have never witnessed in him for such a long time, they are now blaming him for it once he expressed his claim to be a prophet of God. The fact is that his whole life and his words bear witness he has never been besmeared by any error that is the result of forgetfulness, base desires, intentional or unintentional planning.

The word عَنِ in وَمَا يَنۡطِقُ عَنِ الۡهَوٰی is used to point to the source and origin: whatever discourse he is presenting before them does not originate from his own self. His

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discourse is in fact a divine revelation which the Almighty has sent to him for their guidance. These words are also a sarcastic remark on the soothsayers and astrologers: while their discourses arise from their own selves, the origin of the prophet's discourse is from a sublime source belonging to the realm of the divine.

The verse primarily refers to the Qur'ān which the Prophet (sws) was presenting as divine revelation. Thus the succeeding verse اِنۡ هُوَ اِلَّا وَحۡیٌ یُّوۡحٰی explains this aspect. However, since a prophet is infallible in matters of religion and since every word and deed of his is an example for his followers, none of his actions is against justice and fairness even in matters which relate to every day life. If ever he commits a mistake, the Almighty corrects Him.

عَلَّمَهٗ شَدِیۡدُ الۡقُوٰی ۙ[4]

After the attributes of the discourse and those of the person to whom it was revealed are stated, mentioned here are the attributes of Gabriel who brought it down to the Prophet (sws). The words شَدِیۡدُ الۡقُوٰی show that he possesses all higher attributes and abilities and each of them is sound and well-grounded. There is absolutely no possibility that any other spirit influence or over-awe him or deceive or cause any confusion in the instruction of the book or that he himself commit any mistake or be afflicted with doubt or uncertainty. The Almighty has protected him from all such weaknesses so that he is able to discharge the responsibility entrusted to him with full honesty and sincerity. In Sūrah al-Takwīr, he is described thus:

اِنَّهٗ لَقَوۡلُ رَسُوۡلٍ کَرِیۡمٍ. ذِیۡ قُوَّةٍ عِنۡدَ ذِی الۡعَرۡشِ مَکِیۡنٍ. مُّطَاعٍ ثَمَّ اَمِیۡنٍ. (۸۱:۱۹-۲۱)

This is the word brought by a noble messenger. He is endued with great power and held in honour before the Lord of the Throne. He is obeyed and is very trustworthy. (81:19-21)

The expression ذُوۡ مِرَّةٍ means that he is very stable and secure in both his intellect and his character. There is no possibility of him being deceived or being sold or bought. This word is used for intellectual and moral superiority.

It needs to be appreciated that these attributes of Gabriel are not merely mentioned here to disparage the origin and source of inspiration of the soothsayers and astrologers; in fact, the Jews and their associates: the extremist Shiites would, God forbid, blame the Prophet (sws) for being dishonest, biased and lacking in wisdom as has been alluded to in the exegesis of Sūrah al-Baqarah. For this very reason, they always remained enemies of Gabriel, as has been referred to by the Qur'ān.

4. He was taught by an angel, mighty in power.

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ذُوْ مِرَّةٍ ؕ فَاسْتَوٰى ۙ﴿۶﴾ وَهُوَ بِالْاُفُقِ الْاَعْلٰى ؕ﴿۷﴾ ثُمَّ دَنَا فَتَدَلّٰى ۙ﴿۸﴾ فَكَانَ قَابَ قَوْسَيْنِ اَوْ اَدْنٰى ۚ﴿۹﴾ فَاَوْحٰۤى اِلٰى عَبْدِهٖ مَاۤ اَوْحٰى ؕ﴿۱۰﴾ [5]

The word ذُوْ مِرَّةٍ is related to شَدِيْدُ الْقُوٰى. That is why it has been explained in conjunction with the latter earlier. From the word فَاسْتَوٰى begins a description of the nature of teaching referred to above by the words: Gabriel instructed the Prophet (sws) in a very painstaking way and with great affection and attention taught him the divine revelation which was revealed to him by God. The ف in the word فَاسْتَوٰى is for description: initially, he appeared in his original form and stood straight. The place of his appearance was on the higher horizon of the heavens. Higher horizon refers to the one found right on top of one's head. If something appears from this horizon, it will look as clear, sharp and unambiguous as the full moon or the midday sun. On the other hand, if something appears from the eastern, western, northern or southern horizon it will be vague and indistinct just like the new moon on the first day. The purpose of this explanation is that Gabriel appeared before the Prophet (sws) from the higher horizon, and the Prophet (sws) was able to fully observe him with his eyes.

The word تَدَلّٰى means "to bend" or "to hang." This describes the fact that Gabriel in order to teach the Prophet (sws) came near him and just as an affectionate and elderly teacher bends over his dear student with great fondness, he too bent over the Prophet (sws). In other words, it was not that he taught the Prophet (sws) from a distance without caring whether he had fully heard him or not and if he did, was able to understand it or not; on the contrary, with full attention and focus, he delivered the words in a manner that he be able to fully hear and understand them. Here it needs to be kept in mind that the knowledge provided by the devils of the soothsayers is mentioned in by the Qur'ān as خَطِفَ الْخَطْفَةَ (۳۷:۱۰): It is a stolen piece of information which thieves and crooks have got hold of. Obviously, when the teachers are thieves, they would only be teaching their students the way thieves do. The Qur'ān has here prominently mentioned the nature and method of teaching of Gabriel so that the difference in teaching of both is fully highlighted.

In فَكَانَ قَابَ قَوْسَيْنِ اَوْ اَدْنٰى the word قَابَ means "to the extent" and refers to ultimate proximity and nearness. That is, Gabriel came so near the Prophet (sws) that a distance of two bows or even less remained. This comparison also takes into account the Arab taste for they were a people very conversant and familiar with bows and arrows and to express great nearness would use the comparison of one bow's length or two bows' length in the very way we say in our language one meter or two meters. The word "or" here conveys the fact that this comparison is merely an expression for nearness; for the distance can even be less.

5. Towering in character, endued with wisdom. He appeared while he stood poised, being on the highest horizon. Then he drew near and came down within two bows' length or even closer. The Almighty then revealed to His servant that which He revealed.

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In فَاَوۡحٰۤی اِلٰی عَبۡدِہٖ مَاۤ اَوۡحٰی the subject of اَوۡحٰی can be God as well as Gabriel. In the first case, the meaning is absolutely clear: God in an elaborate manner revealed to His servant ie Muḥammad (sws) that which He wanted to reveal. In the second case, the antecedent of the genitive pronoun in عَبۡدِہٖ will be God and the meaning would be that with attention and thoroughness Gabriel revealed to the servant of God what He wanted to reveal or revealed that which God had directed Gabriel to reveal. My inclination is towards the first of these interpretations and there is nothing particularly wrong with the second one either. Some Sufis have absolutely wrongly concluded from this verse that the Almighty, God forbid, has regarded Muḥammad to be a servant of Gabriel. I have continued to point out in this exegesis in the light of various examples that the antecedents of pronouns are determined through contextual indications. Multiplicity (*intishār*) in antecedents is not a defect in every case; in many cases, it creates brevity which is part of the eloquence found in the discourse of the Arabs.

مَا كَذَبَ الۡفُؤَادُ مَا رَاٰی ﴿۱۱﴾ [6]

This is God's attestation to the Prophet's observation: no one should regard this observation to be a result of his fancy or deception of his inner self; it was none of these and in reality, the Prophet (sws) fully observed him.

I have mentioned earlier that when the Prophet (sws) mentioned these observations to his adversaries, they made fun of him. They said that that he saw his hidden desires in his dreams and by regarding his dreamy Paradise to be a reality he related them to people to over-awe them whereas all of them were the products of his fancy and delusions from his inner-self. The Qur'ān has negated this allegation at many places in various styles. In the exegesis of Sūrah al-Takwīr, more details will be provided.

اَفَتُمٰرُوۡنَهٗ عَلٰی مَا یَرٰی ﴿۱۲﴾ [7]

The adversaries of the Prophet (sws) are addressed in this verse and rebuked for disputing with the Prophet (sws) on his observations. The fact is that he informs them of only what he sees with his eyes and hears with his ears. If they are not able to see this, then this will not negate the reality.

Here it needs to be kept in mind that the adversaries of the Prophet (sws) would believe in all the nonsense the soothsayers would convey to them without any hesitation because whatever they would say would be in accordance with their desires; however, the call of the Prophet (sws) was against their desires and for this reason they would raise all kinds of doubts to oppose him.

6. His heart did not deny his vision.
7. So will you then quarrel with him over what he is seeing?

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وَلَقَدْ رَاٰهُ نَزْلَةً اُخْرٰى ﴿١٣﴾ عِنْدَ سِدْرَةِ الْمُنْتَهٰى ﴿١٤﴾ عِنْدَهَا جَنَّةُ الْمَاْوٰى ﴿١٥﴾ [8]

It is not that this was a one-time observation by the Prophet (sws) and thus could be regarded as a mistake or a result of his imagination; he saw Gabriel again near the farthest lote-tree near which is also the garden of repose. The implication is that they should not make fun of the observation he is presenting to them; it is something which requires their serious consideration. It may be kept in mind that here only two initial observations are presented in response to people who were the pioneers in making fun of the Prophet's observations. This does not mean that he saw Gabriel only twice. After these two initial observations, Gabriel started regularly appearing before him in various forms and at different times. So much so, he became the Prophet's most known, frequent and cherished visitor.

The place of the farthest lote-tree is the one where this world of ours ends. It seems that this lote-tree divides our world from the divine realm which is beyond our observation. Neither are we aware of the boundaries of these two worlds nor of the reality of this sign called the lote-tree which bifurcates the two. These things belong to the category of the *mutashābihāt.* Hence as per the directive of the Qur'ān, it is essential to profess faith in them and one should not try to determine their real form and shape. Only God knows their real form. The knowledge of those who have sound knowledge increases through such things. People who make efforts to try to find out their real form and shape, falter and go astray.

The words عِنْدَهَا جَنَّةُ الْمَاْوٰى specify the place of the lote-tree: it is near the garden of repose. Discussion on this garden can be seen in verse 19 of Sūrah al-Sajdah. It seems that just as the lote tree is at the place this world ends, the Garden of Repose is at the place the divine realm begins. It is evident from this stipulation that the Prophet (sws) observed Gabriel the second time at the point these two worlds met.

اِذْ يَغْشَى السِّدْرَةَ مَا يَغْشٰى ﴿١٦﴾ [9]

Described in this verse is the nature of the observation: when the lote-tree was covered with that which was covering it. These words point to the fact that at that time divine manifestations were so numerous on the lote-tree that words are unable to express them.

مَا زَاغَ الْبَصَرُ وَمَا طَغٰى ﴿١٧﴾ [10]

Just as earlier on, the words were: مَا كَذَبَ الْفُؤَادُ مَا رَاٰى. (٥٣: ١١) (his heart did not deny

8. And he beheld him once again near the farthest lote-tree, close to which is the Garden of Repose.

9. When the lote-tree was being covered with that which was covering it.

10. His sight did not falter nor lost its poise.

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his vision, (53:11)), it is stated that at the instance of this second observation his sight did not falter nor lose its poise; whatever he observed was observed with full concentration and attention.

The word زَيْغ means "to bend or to distort" something. The implication is that the Prophet's sight did not bend from its correct angle in the observation of a divine manifestation; on the contrary, he observed everything from a correct angle. The word طَغٰى means "to lose poise and balance." The implication of the word is that though so numerous were the divine manifestations that words are unable to express them, yet his sight did not lose control the slightest. In fact, he deeply and fully observed everything.

لَقَدْ رَاٰى مِنْ اٰيٰتِ رَبِّهِ الْكُبْرٰى ﴿١٨﴾ [11]

This verse refers to the observations of the Prophet (sws) at that instant: indeed, he saw his Lord's great signs. The Qur'ān does not provide details of any of these signs because not only are they beyond words, but also they are beyond human intellect. However, the word كُبْرٰى (great) bears witness to the fact that these signs were above and beyond the ones every man of vision can observe in the world within him and that which surrounds him. Our exegetes are of the opinion that these signs refer to the ones the Prophet (sws) saw in his divine journey to the skies. What supports their opinion is that in Sūrah Banī Isrā'īl where this journey is mentioned, it is stated that he observed great signs of his Lord. However, it must be kept in consideration that he only observed the signs of God; there is no indication that he observed God Himself.

This introductory portion of the *sūrah* may now be summarized so that the remaining portion is easily understood.

People who by regarding the Qur'ān to be a product of soothsaying and astrology wanted to belittle its status are addressed and told:

1. They should not regard the Day of Judgement which the Qur'ān is informing them of to be something ordinary. The Qur'ān is not at all like the nonsensical uttering of their soothsayers and astrologers that has been concocted by its presenter. It is in fact a revelation from God which He has delivered to a special servant of His through His loftiest angel. The purpose is to fully inform them of this day before its advent.

2. The angel who has brought down this divine revelation is held in high esteem by God and that is why he has been selected by God for this task. He is the most trustworthy; he cannot show dishonesty in what he has been entrusted with; he is also very powerful and no one can dare overpower or over-awe him; he has been blessed with all high moral attributes and intellectual abilities and hence there is no possibility that he may be afflicted with any misconception or someone may deceive him or that he may show bias to someone or unjustly oppose anyone.

3. This angel was twice seen by the Prophet (sws) very clearly. In the first instance,

11. Indeed, he saw his Lord's great signs.

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he saw him in the higher horizon and in the second near the farthest lote-tree. There is absolutely no possibility that this observation which he has stated to them be a product of his fancy.

4. The angel taught the Prophet (sws) the way an affectionate teacher instructs his pupil by going near him and bending over him. The Prophet (sws) fully grasped and understood this instruction. It is not that he heard some words coming from a distant source of which he was not sure what he heard and understood.

Section II: Verses (19-30)

In the succeeding verses, the adversaries of the Prophet (sws) are warned that they have no basis not to fear of the Day of Judgement which they are being so elaborately and thoroughly informed of. Are they depending on the intercession of their self-claimed deities: Lāt, Manāt and 'Uzzā? If this is true, then they should remember that they are merely hypothetical names which qualify no one in the real world. Reward and punishment is a reality. They cannot combat reality with conjecture. Whatever false wishes they have nurtured in their hearts are mere desires; it is not certain that they materialize. All the affairs of the heavens and the earth are in the hands of God. Not even an angel can open his mouth in the presence of God without His permission. Those who have named angels after women, and are indifferent to the Qur'ān because of dependence on them have only made a back door to escape the accountability of the Hereafter. However, even this will be of no benefit to them. God knows best the righteous from the wrong-doers.

In the light of this background, readers may proceed to read the next section of verses.

Text and Translation

اَفَرَءَيْتُمُ اللّٰتَ وَالْعُزّٰى ﴿١٩﴾ وَمَنٰوةَ الثَّالِثَةَ الْاُخْرٰى ﴿٢٠﴾ اَلَكُمُ الذَّكَرُ وَلَهُ الْاُنْثٰى ﴿٢١﴾ تِلْكَ اِذًا قِسْمَةٌ ضِيْزٰى ﴿٢٢﴾ اِنْ هِىَ اِلَّآ
اَسْمَآءٌ سَمَّيْتُمُوْهَآ اَنْتُمْ وَاٰبَآؤُكُمْ مَّآ اَنْزَلَ اللّٰهُ بِهَا مِنْ سُلْطٰنٍ ؕ اِنْ يَّتَّبِعُوْنَ اِلَّا الظَّنَّ وَمَا تَهْوَى الْاَنْفُسُ ۚ وَلَقَدْ جَآءَهُمْ مِّنْ رَّبِّهِمُ
الْهُدٰى ﴿٢٣﴾ اَمْ لِلْاِنْسَانِ مَا تَمَنّٰى ﴿٢٤﴾ فَلِلّٰهِ الْاٰخِرَةُ وَالْاُوْلٰى ﴿٢٥﴾ وَكَمْ مِّنْ مَّلَكٍ فِى السَّمٰوٰتِ لَا تُغْنِىْ شَفَاعَتُهُمْ شَيْـًٔا اِلَّا مِنْ
بَعْدِ اَنْ يَّاْذَنَ اللّٰهُ لِمَنْ يَّشَآءُ وَيَرْضٰى ﴿٢٦﴾ اِنَّ الَّذِيْنَ لَا يُؤْمِنُوْنَ بِالْاٰخِرَةِ لَيُسَمُّوْنَ الْمَلٰٓئِكَةَ تَسْمِيَةَ الْاُنْثٰى ﴿٢٧﴾ وَمَا لَهُمْ بِهٖ
مِنْ عِلْمٍ ؕ اِنْ يَّتَّبِعُوْنَ اِلَّا الظَّنَّ ۚ وَاِنَّ الظَّنَّ لَا يُغْنِىْ مِنَ الْحَقِّ شَيْـًٔا ﴿٢٨﴾ فَاَعْرِضْ عَنْ مَّنْ تَوَلّٰى ۙ عَنْ ذِكْرِنَا وَلَمْ يُرِدْ اِلَّا الْحَيٰوةَ
الدُّنْيَا ﴿٢٩﴾ ذٰلِكَ مَبْلَغُهُمْ مِّنَ الْعِلْمِ ؕ اِنَّ رَبَّكَ هُوَ اَعْلَمُ بِمَنْ ضَلَّ عَنْ سَبِيْلِهٖ ۙ وَهُوَ اَعْلَمُ بِمَنِ اهْتَدٰى ﴿٣٠﴾

Have you ever pondered over Lāt and 'Uzzā and the third Manāt which is next in rank below them? For your own selves you like sons and for Him daughters! This indeed is a division unjust! They are but names which you and your fathers have invented in whose

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favour the Almighty has revealed no argument. They follow conjectures and the whims of their own souls, even though there has already come to them a manifest guidance from their Lord. (19-23)

Will man attain all that he desires? Therefore, remember that the Hereafter and this world are under the control of God. And how many angels are there in the heavens whose intercession shall be of no avail until the Almighty gives permission to whom He wants and for whom He chooses. (24-26)

Those who do not believe in the Hereafter call the angels by the names of women. Yet of this they have no knowledge; they merely follow conjecture and conjecture can never take the place of truth. Therefore, turn away from those who turn away from Our Reminder and seek only the life of this world. This is the farthest limit of their knowledge. Your Lord fully knows those who have strayed from His path and those who are rightly guided. (27-30)

Explanation

اَفَرَءَيْتُمُ اللّٰتَ وَالْعُزّٰى ﴿١٩﴾ وَمَنٰوةَ الثَّالِثَةَ الْاُخْرٰى ﴿٢٠﴾[12]

The question posed in these verses is meant to express amazement and humiliation. Earlier on, the attributes of Gabriel were mentioned: he is mighty in power, towering in character, endued with wisdom. In Sūrah al-Takwīr, the words are: مُّطَاعٍ (٨١:٢١) (he is obeyed, (81:21)) and ذِىْ قُوَّةٍ عِنْدَ ذِى الْعَرْشِ مَكِيْنٍ.(٨١:٢٠) (held in honour before the Lord of the Throne, (81:20)) and I have already discussed what these attributes tacitly imply. Here another special aspect of his is worthy of attention which becomes evident from the humiliating style of this verse: a little deliberation shows that the attributes of Gabriel mentioned are very commendable manly ones. In other words, the Quraysh are rebuked by referring to these attributes of this exalted angel: how can these angels having such lofty manly attributes be compared to their deities: Lāt, 'Uzzā and Manāt about whom they think that they are God's daughters and whom they have named after women.

It will become evident from succeeding verses that all three of them are symbols of the angels. It has been pointed out at a number of places in this exegesis that the idolaters of Arabia regarded the angels to be daughters of God and thought that God did whatever they said. For this reason, these deities were able to procure for their worshippers sustenance and children in this world and if ever there was going to be a Day of Judgment they would have them go scot-free without any punishment. In particular, these three deities had a great status for them. Their recommendation and intercession was considered to bear certain results. About them, they believed تلك الغرانيق العلى وإن شفاعتهن لترتجى (these are deities of exalted status and there is full hope that their

12. Have you ever pondered over Lāt and 'Uzzā and the third Manāt which is next in rank below them?

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recommendations will be accepted).

There is no need to get into a discussion as to which among the tribes of Arabia worshipped which one of them. It is possible that a particular tribe specially related itself to one of them; however, all the idolaters of Arabia equally acknowledged their exaltedness. In order to express and impose their political and religious leadership over the whole of Arabia, the Quraysh had gathered the statues of all the deities in the holy *ka'bah*. Since the worshippers of these three deities in Arabia outnumbered all others, the Quraysh too revered them the most.

It is also evident from the Qur'ān that though these three deities were regarded as the most exalted in the eyes of Arabs yet between them there were gradations in status. Lāt and 'Uzzā had the highest status. Though Manāt was also regarded as very exalted yet it was lower in rank to the other two. Thus the Qur'ān has qualified it with the attributes: ثالثة and أخرى. The first of these refers to its placement amongst the highest of the deities and the second of them informs us of its relative rank as compared to the rest of the two: though it belongs to their category yet it is second in stature to them. The words أولى and أخرى are known in Arabic to express rank and status and have been used in this in the Qur'ān as well. A clear example of this usage can be seen in the following verse: وَقَالَتْ أُولٰىهُمْ لِأُخْرٰىهُمْ فَمَا كَانَ لَكُمْ عَلَيْنَا مِنْ فَضْلٍ فَذُوقُوا الْعَذَابَ بِمَا كُنْتُمْ تَكْسِبُونَ. (٣٩:٧) (Then the first will say to the last: "You were no better than we. Taste the penalty of your misdeeds," (7:39)).

A better part of the discussions found in books of exegesis regarding the etymology and meaning of these names is baseless.[13] In my opinion, the name اللاّتْ (al-Lāt) is a distorted form of الآلِهَة (al-Ālihah). Just as the greatest of the worshipped is الله they had adopted the name الآلِهَة for their greatest deity which the common masses with their repeated use of the word had converted to اللاّتْ. Some people regard it from the root لَتٌّ which means "to dissolve and to knead." They thought that this was the name of a person who fed the pilgrims in the times of *ḥajj* by making a beverage in which they would dissolve barley in water. After his death, people started worshipping his grave and he came to be regarded by this name as a deity. This opinion is not only wrong as far as etymology is concerned, it is also against Qur'ānic stipulations. It is evident from the Qur'ān that they were statues of deities and they were carved out by naming the angels after women.

The word عُزّٰى obviously is the feminine form of عَزِيْز ('Azīz) and أَعَزّ (A'azza). عَزِيْز is a prominent attribute of God which portrays His exaltedness and reverence. From this very aspect, this deity is called عُزّٰى.

In my opinion the word مَنَات is from the root منية which would mean a deity coming close to which is greatly cherished or which is a means to grant wishes.

13. See, for example: Ibn Kathir, *Tafsir al-Qur'ān al-'Aẓim*, vol. 4, 254-255. (*Translator*)

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اَلَكُمُ الذَّكَرُ وَلَهُ الْاُنْثٰى ﴿٢١﴾ تِلْكَ اِذًا قِسْمَةٌ ضِيْزٰى ﴿٢٢﴾ [14]

There is sarcasm in these sentences: the Arabs like male offspring and hate female offspring to the extent that whenever a girl is born to them they start hiding themselves from others out of embarrassment. So when such are their feelings about the female gender they should at least be gracious enough to not impute to others what they dislike for their own selves. What justice can be seen in this distribution for God has created all but they associate daughters to Him and sons to their own selves? This distribution is absolutely unfair and unmerited. It was but just and fair that what they disliked for themselves should not have been related by them to God.

The word ضِيْزٰى means "something which is unjust and unfair." The verb ضَازَهُ would mean ظَلَمَهُ (he oppressed him; he was unjust to him).

The implication of the whole verse is that ascribing sons or daughters to God is in the first place totally against God's oneness as well as human nature and intellect; they have shown further injustice by ascribing to God what they regard a means of embarrassment for themselves. This only means that they regard God to be even inferior in status to themselves.

اِنْ هِيَ اِلَّآ اَسْمَآءٌ سَمَّيْتُمُوْهَآ اَنْتُمْ وَاٰبَآؤُكُمْ مَّآ اَنْزَلَ اللّٰهُ بِهَا مِنْ سُلْطٰنٍ ؕ اِنْ يَّتَّبِعُوْنَ اِلَّا الظَّنَّ وَمَا تَهْوَى الْاَنْفُسُ ۚ وَلَقَدْ جَآءَهُمْ مِّنْ رَّبِّهِمُ الْهُدٰى ﴿٢٣﴾ [15]

Expressed in these verses is the reality of these deities: they are merely names which they and their forefathers have given them and they do not represent any one in the real world. The Almighty has not revealed any sanction in their favour which they can present in their support. If they have found their forefathers worshipping them, then this is not reason enough. They too like them worshipped these deities while blindly following their own forefathers. God's sanction in this regard could have been found in human nature and intellect or could have been found in God's signs scattered not only in the world around man but also in the world within him or could have been directly communicated to them through His prophets and messengers. He could have said that such and such are his favourite daughters whose recommendation He always accepts and forgives all those who worship these deities. When none of these sanctions exists, then they are merely names invented by them and their forefathers and the beings they qualify do not exist in reality.

Consider next the portion: اِنْ يَّتَّبِعُوْنَ اِلَّا الظَّنَّ وَمَا تَهْوَى الْاَنْفُسُ ۚ وَلَقَدْ جَآءَهُمْ مِّنْ رَّبِّهِمُ الْهُدٰى. In the

14. For your own selves you like sons and for Him daughters! This indeed is a division unjust!

15. They are but names which you and your fathers have invented in whose favour the Almighty has revealed no argument. They follow conjectures and the whims of their own souls, even though there has already come to them a manifest guidance from their Lord.

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previous portions of this set of verses, the discourse was set in direct address. Here the discourse has become indirect. This is a rebuke on their deprivation and misfortune and an expression of sorrow on their intellectual decadence: God Himself had specially revealed His guidance to them; however, instead of following it, they started following their own conjectures and their own whims.

The word الْهُدٰى is used for the guidance which the Almighty has revealed in the form of the Qur'ān and Sunnah and whose exaltedness and purity has been mentioned in the introductory verses of the *sūrah*. Following conjecture and whims is dangerous in all circumstances; however, following them in spite of the presence of divine guidance is like throwing one self into the pit of death in broad daylight.

The words وَ مَا تَهْوَى الْاَنْفُسُ specifically refer to the innovation of polytheism of these people which is under discussion. The reason is that every innovation originates from some personal whim or wish. When a person's soul does not find in itself the strength to fulfil the demands of a reality and its denial is also not easy for it, then it tries to adopt ways which apparently do not seem to be its denial yet are able to afford it with a route to escape heavy responsibilities thereby imposed. Whatever religious innovation one reflects on, one will find this fiend of human whim and desire hidden in it.

Obviously, there existed no intellectual or scriptural arguments in favour of these deities; however, in order to silence every indicator for reward and punishment, Satan tried to deceive these Idolaters by saying that angels were daughters of God and that such and such daughters were especially dear to Him. He tried to convince them that He listens to what these special ones say to Him and that if they intercede, He necessarily honours them. Hence all those who worship them and make offerings at their altars will win God's favour through their intercession and be granted wealth and children in this world and a high status in the Hereafter if ever it comes about. In this manner, success in this world and the next was rendered an easy affair and any danger of accountability and reward and punishment in the Hereafter was warded off.

However, if one deliberates on this issue, what else is the reason behind this mythology other than personal desire and fancy? A person's inner-self wanted that a way be found to procure God's nearness and Paradise so that it did not have to sacrifice any of its desires. Satan showed it this way.

اَمْ لِلْاِنْسَانِ مَا تَمَنّٰى ﴿۲۴﴾ فَلِلّٰهِ الْاٰخِرَةُ وَ الْاُوْلٰى ﴿۲۵﴾ [16]

This is an expression of amazement on what is said above as well as a comment on it. The implication is that it is up to them to carve out any philosophy in the guidance of their whims and desires to please themselves; however, it is not necessary that all their desires will be granted; there is a great difference between reality and desire;

16. Will man attain all that he desires? Therefore, remember that the Hereafter and this world are under the control of God.

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when they face reality, only then will they realize that they were building castles in the air – castles whose foundations are built on sand; none of their deities will be able to help them in any way; each person will be faced with his deeds; those whose good deeds abound will enter Paradise and those in which evil deeds abound will be cast into Hell regardless of who they are.

Here it needs to be kept in mind that just as the Idolaters of Arabia had nurtured a lot of baseless desires in their hearts whilst relying on their deities, the Jews, Christians and Muslims too had a lot of desires in their hearts which were a product of their fancy. I have already alluded to the details of the desires of the Jews and Christians which the Qur'ān calls as *amāniyyu* in the exegesis of Sūrah al-Baqarah and Sūrah Āl 'Imrān. In my book, *Ḥaqīqat-e Shirk-o Tawḥīd*,[17] I have elaborated upon the beliefs which Muslims while following the Jews and Christians had invented against the Qur'ān and Sunnah. By using the general word "man" in this verse, the Qur'ān has addressed each and every individual without any exception and informed him that whatever wishes and desires a person may harbour in his heart is up to him; however, he should remember that desires neither alter the reality nor will the law of God show bias for any one in the slightest way.

The words فَلِلّٰهِ الْاٰخِرَةُ وَالْاُوْلٰى signify that if any person wrongly wishes that the laws and practices of God will change to accommodate his desires, then he should fully know that both this world and the next are in the complete control of God; no one has the status or stature to intercede before Him for someone without His permission or to try to affect a change in His laws or decisions.

وَكَمْ مِّنْ مَّلَكٍ فِي السَّمٰوٰتِ لَا تُغْنِيْ شَفَاعَتُهُمْ شَيْـًٔا اِلَّا مِنْۢ بَعْدِ اَنْ يَّاْذَنَ اللّٰهُ لِمَنْ يَّشَآءُ وَيَرْضٰى ﴿٢٦﴾ [18]

This verse further explains the previous one: let alone these deities of the Idolaters there are many angels, both of high and low rank, present in the heavens whose intercession will be of no avail to anyone except if God permits them. In the first place, no one will dare open his mouth without the permission of God and whoever tries to open it will only be allowed to do so in favour of the person for whom God will permit his intercession.

اِنَّ الَّذِيْنَ لَا يُؤْمِنُوْنَ بِالْاٰخِرَةِ لَيُسَمُّوْنَ الْمَلٰٓئِكَةَ تَسْمِيَةَ الْاُنْثٰى ﴿٢٧﴾ [19]

This verse points to the people who have fabricated this mythology: they are the ones who do not have faith in the Hereafter; even if they accept it in the capacity of a

17. See: Amin Aḥsan Iṣlāḥi, *Ḥaqīqat-e Shirk-o Tawḥīd* (Lahore: Faran Foundation, 1988), 71-99.

18. And how many angels are there in the heavens whose intercession shall be of no avail until the Almighty gives permission to whom He wants and for whom He chooses.

19. Those who do not believe in the Hereafter call the angels by the names of women.

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supposition, they do not have belief in the reality of the Hereafter as the Day on which the complete justice of God will manifest itself and each person will be rewarded or punished in accordance with his deeds. It is these people who have named angels after women and concocted the mythology that they are beloved daughters of God and it is through their intercession alone that the favours of this life are won and if there ever is a hereafter, then it is they who will become their real helpers and will make God grant them all they want.

وَمَا لَهُمْ بِهٖ مِنْ عِلْمٍ ؕ اِنْ يَّتَّبِعُوْنَ اِلَّا الظَّنَّ ۚ وَاِنَّ الظَّنَّ لَا يُغْنِيْ مِنَ الْحَقِّ شَيْـًٔا ﴿۲۸﴾ [20]

Though they have fabricated this folk-tale to save their skins from the responsibilities of the Hereafter, it is based on mere conjecture. Merely to fulfil their fancies, they are indulging in blatant conjecture. These foolish people do not know that conjecture is what it is and cannot replace reality in any way. When the reality manifests itself, they will come to know that they had been only dreaming throughout their lives.

In verse 23, the word ظَنٌّ has been used in contrast to the word الْهُدٰى (the guidance). Here it has been used in contrast to both عِلْم (knowledge) and حَقّ (the truth). Knowledge is not only obtained through innate guidance and through one's intellect but also through divine revelations. Knowledge which is obtained through divine revelation in fact occupies the status of الْهُدٰى (the guidance) because it is beyond any shadow of doubt. Thus it has also been called حَقّ (the truth). What is not substantiated by innate guidance and intellect nor by divine revelation is in fact totally speculative and baseless. The Qur'ān by using the words وَمَا لَهُمْ بِهٖ مِنْ عِلْمٍ has stripped this mythology of the idolaters from every support of knowledge and thereby regarded it to be a fabricated tale. In other words, in its favour, they neither have any corroboration by reason nor revelation. The Arabs were fully aware of this reality that what is not substantiated by reason cannot be regarded as knowledge; it is mere conjecture (ظَنٌّ) which has no basis. The famous classical poet Ṭarfah ibn al-'Abd has distinguished between conjecture and knowledge in the following manner:

وَاَعْلَمُ عِلْمًا لَيْسَ بِالظَّنِّ اَنَّهُ

(and I know what is based on knowledge which is not conjecture so that …)[21]

There is another aspect of conjecture (ظَنٌّ) which I will *inshā'Allāh* explain under the following verse of Sūrah al-Ḥāqqah: اِنِّيْ ظَنَنْتُ اَنِّيْ مُلٰقٍ حِسَابِيَهْ. (٢٠:٦٩).

20. Yet of this they have no knowledge; they follow merely conjecture and conjecture can never take the place of truth.

21. Al-Tabrayzī, *Dīwān al-ḥamāsah*, vol. 2 (Beirut: Dār al-Qalam, n.d.), 182.

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فَاَعۡرِضۡ عَنۡ مَّنۡ تَوَلّٰى ۙ عَنۡ ذِكۡرِنَا وَلَمۡ يُرِدۡ اِلَّا الۡحَيٰوةَ الدُّنۡيَا ۝ [22]

Here the Prophet (sws) has been directed that people who are so arrogant and big-headed that instead of following the guidance of God they want to follow their own fancies and instead of knowledge want to rely on conjecture and in place of good want to tread the path of evil, he should not pursue them much. If they have shown indifference to God's guidance, then the Prophet (sws) too should ignore them; he has discharged his responsibility; now it is their responsibility; soon they shall witness its consequences.

The word ذِكۡر here refers to the Qur'ān. It is used for it at many instances, and it has various aspects to which I have alluded at various places. Here it is used in this sense because the Qur'ān is reminding them of the Hereafter and its responsibilities – people who have become indifferent to them because of reliance on their imaginary deities.

The words وَلَمۡ يُرِدۡ اِلَّا الۡحَيٰوةَ الدُّنۡيَا refer to the real reason behind their denial: they have regarded this life and its lures to be their real objective.

ذٰلِكَ مَبۡلَغُهُمۡ مِّنَ الۡعِلۡمِ ؕ اِنَّ رَبَّكَ هُوَ اَعۡلَمُ بِمَنۡ ضَلَّ عَنۡ سَبِيۡلِهٖ ۙ وَهُوَ اَعۡلَمُ بِمَنِ اهۡتَدٰى ۝ [23]

The implication of this verse is that these people only have access to the apparent and the external form of this world; neither do they have access to the reality behind this external form nor do they have any desire for it even though it is the latter which should have been their prime consideration; without it, this world is meaningless and purposeless and a place of amusement. The fact, on the other hand, is that so evident from every nook and corner of this universe is its creator's power and authority that except for a fool no one can be audacious enough to deny it. It is beyond a powerful and wise being that He create such a huge place merely for amusement.

It is evident from the style of ذٰلِكَ مَبۡلَغُهُمۡ مِّنَ الۡعِلۡمِ that it is merely their narrow mindedness and meanness that they are lured by its external form and have become indifferent to its reality even though all its apparent pleasures are temporary and transient. The real eternal kingdom is the one towards which the Qur'ān calls them but they because of their timidity and deprivation do not find the courage to go after it. This aspect is explained by the following verse of Sūrah al-Rūm:

يَعۡلَمُوۡنَ ظَاهِرًا مِّنَ الۡحَيٰوةِ الدُّنۡيَا ۖ وَهُمۡ عَنِ الۡاٰخِرَةِ هُمۡ غٰفِلُوۡنَ. (۳۰:۷)

They know the outward show of this nether life, but of the life to come they are heedless. (30:7)

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22. Therefore, turn away from those who turn away from Our Reminder and seek only the life of this world.

23. This is the farthest limit of their knowledge. Your Lord best knows those who have strayed from His path and those who are rightly guided.

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The words اِنَّ رَبَّكَ هُوَ اَعْلَمُ بِمَنْ ضَلَّ عَنْ سَبِيْلِهٖ ۙ وَ هُوَ اَعْلَمُ بِمَنِ اهْتَدٰى assure the Prophet (sws) and warn and threaten the people who are slaves to the pleasures of this world. The Prophet (sws) is addressed and told that he should now ignore them; his Lord fully knows those who have deviated from His path as well as those who are rightly guided. He will deal with every person the way he is worthy of being dealt with. His knowledge embraces every thing and His power dominates all. Neither will those people who have strayed from the right path be able to escape His grasp nor will those who are fighting every misery for His cause be deprived of His help and mercy.

Section III: (Verses 31-53)

The succeeding verses further explain and emphasize what is stated in the previous section.

First, it is explained that the kingdom of the heavens and the earth is under the control of the one and only God. He has not granted any share of His power to their self-claimed deities so as to be able to influence His justice. Thus He will necessarily punish the sinners and reward the righteous. As far as those people are concerned who, because of their intercessors or because of their lineage and race or because of some apparent service to the House of God and its pilgrims were guilty of self-praise and regarded Paradise to be their birth-right, they shall be cast into Hell by God. Only those will be safe from His grasp who desisted from usurping rights and from open indecencies. If they chance by a sin, they will be forgiven by God once they repent. Vast is God's mercy. Those who in conceit of their superiority and holiness think that whatever their deeds God will not seize them should keep in mind the fact that the Almighty knows best the material from which they have been created; a creature made from mud, sludge and an impure fluid should not claim to be so holy and sacred.

After this, wonder is expressed at the people who overrate themselves and who do not have it in their hearts to spend in the way of God but in their claim of association with Abraham (sws) or Moses (sws) dream that they will surely be granted a high status in the Hereafter even though the most prominent teaching of Abraham (sws) and Moses (sws) was that in the Hereafter no one will bear the burden of another person; each person will face what his own deeds have earned for him.

After this is explained that sorrow and happiness, life and death, subsistence and children, affluence and poverty are all under the control of God and therefore everyone must turn to Him at all times. Those who worship the Sirius star which comes out in the spring season thinking that the blessings of spring are the result of its bestowal should remember that God is the Lord of Sirius as well.

After the above previous nations are briefly referred to in that they too were led astray the way the Quraysh were; so they should seek a lesson from their fate recorded

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in history and not invite the wrath of God.

In the light of this background, readers may recite the verses cited below.

Text and Translation

وَلِلّٰهِ مَا فِي السَّمٰوٰتِ وَمَا فِي الْاَرْضِ ۙ لِيَجْزِيَ الَّذِيْنَ اَسَآءُوْا بِمَا عَمِلُوْا وَيَجْزِيَ الَّذِيْنَ اَحْسَنُوْا بِالْحُسْنٰى ﴿٣١﴾ اَلَّذِيْنَ
يَجْتَنِبُوْنَ كَبٰٓئِرَ الْاِثْمِ وَالْفَوَاحِشَ اِلَّا اللَّمَمَ ۭ اِنَّ رَبَّكَ وَاسِعُ الْمَغْفِرَةِ ۭ هُوَ اَعْلَمُ بِكُمْ اِذْ اَنْشَاَكُمْ مِّنَ الْاَرْضِ وَاِذْ اَنْتُمْ اَجِنَّةٌ
فِيْ بُطُوْنِ اُمَّهٰتِكُمْ ۚ فَلَا تُزَكُّوْٓا اَنْفُسَكُمْ ۭ هُوَ اَعْلَمُ بِمَنِ اتَّقٰى ﴿٣٢﴾ اَفَرَءَيْتَ الَّذِيْ تَوَلّٰى ﴿٣٣﴾ وَاَعْطٰى قَلِيْلًا وَّاَكْدٰى ﴿٣٤﴾ اَعِنْدَهٗ
عِلْمُ الْغَيْبِ فَهُوَ يَرٰى ﴿٣٥﴾ اَمْ لَمْ يُنَبَّاْ بِمَا فِيْ صُحُفِ مُوْسٰى ﴿٣٦﴾ وَاِبْرٰهِيْمَ الَّذِيْ وَفّٰٓى ﴿٣٧﴾ اَلَّا تَزِرُ وَازِرَةٌ وِّزْرَ اُخْرٰى ﴿٣٨﴾ وَاَنْ
لَّيْسَ لِلْاِنْسَانِ اِلَّا مَا سَعٰى ﴿٣٩﴾ وَاَنَّ سَعْيَهٗ سَوْفَ يُرٰى ﴿٤٠﴾ ثُمَّ يُجْزٰىهُ الْجَزَاۗءَ الْاَوْفٰى ﴿٤١﴾ وَاَنَّ اِلٰى رَبِّكَ الْمُنْتَهٰى ﴿٤٢﴾ وَاَنَّهٗ
هُوَ اَضْحَكَ وَاَبْكٰى ﴿٤٣﴾ وَاَنَّهٗ هُوَ اَمَاتَ وَاَحْيَا ﴿٤٤﴾ وَاَنَّهٗ خَلَقَ الزَّوْجَيْنِ الذَّكَرَ وَالْاُنْثٰى ﴿٤٥﴾ مِنْ نُّطْفَةٍ اِذَا تُمْنٰى ﴿٤٦﴾ وَاَنَّ
عَلَيْهِ النَّشْاَةَ الْاُخْرٰى ﴿٤٧﴾ وَاَنَّهٗ هُوَ اَغْنٰى وَاَقْنٰى ﴿٤٨﴾ وَاَنَّهٗ هُوَ رَبُّ الشِّعْرٰى ﴿٤٩﴾ وَاَنَّهٗٓ اَهْلَكَ عَادَۨا الْاُوْلٰى ﴿٥٠﴾ وَثَمُوْدَا فَمَآ
اَبْقٰى ﴿٥١﴾ وَقَوْمَ نُوْحٍ مِّنْ قَبْلُ ۭ اِنَّهُمْ كَانُوْا هُمْ اَظْلَمَ وَاَطْغٰى ﴿٥٢﴾ وَالْمُؤْتَفِكَةَ اَهْوٰى ﴿٥٣﴾

And whatever is in the heavens and in this earth is in the jurisdiction of God so that He punish the evil-doers for their deeds and bestow a good reward on those who did good deeds – those who used to abstain from heinous sins and open indecencies save those occasional yet minor sins to which they were induced. Indeed, your Lord is vast in mercy. He knows you fairly well from the time when He created you from the earth and when you were a foetus in your mothers' wombs. Therefore, ascribe not purity to yourselves. He knows very well the pious. (31-32)

Did you see the one who turned his back, gave a little and then held back? Has he the knowledge of the Unseen; thus he is seeing it? Does he not know what is in the Scriptures of Moses and of Abraham – who fulfilled all his promises; it is in the Scriptures that no soul shall bear another's burden and that a man shall only receive that which he strove and that what he has earned shall soon be shown to him; he shall then be fully rewarded and that all things shall in the end return to God. (33-42)

And that, indeed, it is He Who makes [people] laugh and makes [them] weep, and it is He Who gives death and He Who gives life and it is He Who created the two spouses the male and the female from a drop when it is poured forth and that upon Him is the second bringing forth and that it is He who bestowed and enriched and it is He who is the Lord of Sirius as well. (43-49)

And it is He who destroyed the ancient 'Ād and the Thamud also, thus sparing no one, and before them the people of Noah also. Indeed, they were very unjust and rebellious, and [He] also routed the overthrown cities. Thus there covered them that which did cover them. Now, which of your Lord's marvels will you deny! (50-55)

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Explanation

وَلِلّٰهِ مَا فِي السَّمٰوٰتِ وَمَا فِي الْاَرْضِ ۙ لِيَجْزِيَ الَّذِيْنَ اَسَآءُوْا بِمَا عَمِلُوْا وَيَجْزِيَ الَّذِيْنَ اَحْسَنُوْا بِالْحُسْنٰى ﴿٣١﴾[24]

Mentioned here is the consequence of the refutation of polytheism and intercession done in the earlier verses: the dominion of the heavens and the earth is in the hands of God. No one has a share in them that he may challenge the authority of God in them or that someone may interfere with His intentions or influence His decisions.

The letter ل in يَجْزِيَ is to not to state the cause but to state the consequence. The implication is that when He alone is the only master and controller, then the obvious corollary of this is that those who are relying on their self-styled and self-claimed deities are only deceiving their own selves. God is wise and just. He will definitely punish the sinners and there is no one who can save them from God's grasp. Similarly, He will necessarily richly reward the pious and the virtuous and to receive this reward they will absolutely not be required to ask for the intercession of anyone.

It is evident from this verse that the sinners will only see exactly the evils they had committed and God will not make any addition to this. On the other hand, the righteous will not be merely rewarded for their virtues; God will bless them further with His favours. God is just and thus will not be unjust to anyone; however, He is also gracious and thus will bless His righteous people with more than what they deserve.

اَلَّذِيْنَ يَجْتَنِبُوْنَ كَبٰٓئِرَ الْاِثْمِ وَالْفَوَاحِشَ اِلَّا اللَّمَمَ ۭ اِنَّ رَبَّكَ وَاسِعُ الْمَغْفِرَةِ ۭ هُوَ اَعْلَمُ بِكُمْ اِذْ اَنْشَاَكُمْ مِّنَ الْاَرْضِ وَاِذْ اَنْتُمْ اَجِنَّةٌ فِيْ بُطُوْنِ اُمَّهٰتِكُمْ ۚ فَلَا تُزَكُّوْٓا اَنْفُسَكُمْ ۭ هُوَ اَعْلَمُ بِمَنِ اتَّقٰى ﴿٣٢﴾[25]

The verse says that if any sin emanates from people who abstain from heinous sins and acts of open lewdness, then it is as if they get entangled with filth while treading the terrain of life. They may stumble into sin; however, just as a person who has a proclivity for cleanliness can never dwell in dirt and tries to come out of it as soon as is possible for him, in a similar manner these people too do not live in sin; they try to cleanse themselves as soon as a sin is committed by repenting and reforming themselves.

The words ألمام and لمم mean to stay at a place for a short period. The meaning of لمم

24. And whatever is in the heavens and in this earth is within the jurisdiction of God so that He punish the evil-doers for their deeds and bestow a good reward on those who did good deeds.

25. Those who used to abstain from heinous sins and open indecencies save those occasional yet minor sins to which they were induced. Indeed, your Lord is vast in mercy. He knows you fairly well from the time when He created you from the earth and when you were a foetus in your mothers' wombs. Therefore, ascribe not purity to yourselves. He knows very well the pious.

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ascribed to Mujāhid and Ibn 'Abbās (rta)[26] is that a person stumbles into a sin but then soon comes out of this state. What is meant is that it is not required of a person to lead a sinless life. A person may at times while succumbing to emotions and desires commit a sin; however, God requires of him that he should have such a vigilant sense of faith in him that a sin should not embrace his life so much that it becomes difficult for him to leave it; such should be the level of this vigilance that when a person trips into a sin, he reforms himself as soon as he realizes it. God will forgive people who lead such lives; vast is His mercy.

In Sūrah al-Nisā' this subject is discussed in the following words:

اِنَّمَا التَّوْبَةُ عَلَى اللّٰهِ لِلَّذِيْنَ يَعْمَلُوْنَ السُّوْٓءَ بِجَهَالَةٍ ثُمَّ يَتُوْبُوْنَ مِنْ قَرِيْبٍ فَاُولٰٓئِكَ يَتُوْبُ اللّٰهُ عَلَيْهِمْ ؕ وَ كَانَ اللّٰهُ عَلِيْمًا حَكِيْمًا. وَلَيْسَتِ التَّوْبَةُ لِلَّذِيْنَ يَعْمَلُوْنَ السَّيِّاٰتِ ۚ حَتّٰٓى اِذَا حَضَرَ اَحَدَهُمُ الْمَوْتُ قَالَ اِنِّيْ تُبْتُ الْـٰٔنَ وَلَا الَّذِيْنَ يَمُوْتُوْنَ وَهُمْ كُفَّارٌ ؕ اُولٰٓئِكَ اَعْتَدْنَا لَهُمْ عَذَابًا اَلِيْمًا. (٤: ١٧-١٨)

God's responsibility is to forgive only those who commit a sin while being overwhelmed with emotions and then quickly repent. It is they who are forgiven by God. God is all-knowing and wise. But He does not forgive those who sin all their lives and, when death comes to them, say: "Now I repent!" nor those who die as disbelievers. It is for these whom We have prepared a grievous punishment. (4:17-18)

In the expression اَلَّذِيْنَ يَجْتَنِبُوْنَ كَبٰٓئِرَ الْاِثْمِ وَالْفَوَاحِشَ the word اِثْم refers to sins which relate to usurpation of rights, oppression and injustice and the word فَوَاحِشَ refers to open indecencies and sexual transgressions. If Muslims are urged to desist from major sins, then this does not mean that they will not be held unaccountable for the minor ones. As explained at relevant places of this exegesis, this only means that so strong is the sense of faith of people who safeguard themselves from major sins that they never remain adamant on minor ones. How can a person who can be safely trusted with thousands remain content on being called a dishonest person in the case of small amounts.

The verse sounds a warning to people who were contaminated with all sorts of sins and sexual transgressions but dreamt of ending up in Paradise on the basis of the intercession of their alleged deities and on the basis of nobility of their forefathers and the superiority of their race. They are told that what is going to be of avail to them before God is faith and righteous deeds and not this false support.

It has been referred to earlier in this exegesis that both the Quraysh and the People of the Book were inflicted with some sort of false notion or the other. Besides their deities, the Quraysh had great pride in their lineage as well as on their custodianship

26. Abū Ja'far Muḥammad ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmi' al-bayān 'an tā'wīl āy al-Qur'ān*, vol. 27 (Beirut: Dār al-fikr, 1405 AH), 66.

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of the House of God. They were the progeny of Abraham (sws) and Ishmael (sws). Because of their pride on their custodianship of the House of God, they were warned by the Qur'ān in the following words:

اَجَعَلْتُمْ سِقَايَةَ الْحَآجِّ وَعِمَارَةَ الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ كَمَنْ اٰمَنَ بِاللّٰهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْاٰخِرِ وَجٰهَدَ فِيْ سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ. (۹:۱۹)

Did you regard providing water to the pilgrims and managing the Sacred Mosque equivalent to the deed of the people who believed in God and the Last Day, and fought for God's cause? (9:19)

They are told that though providing water to the pilgrims and looking after the House of God is a noble deed, yet this cannot take the place of embracing faith and doing righteous deeds nor one which can conceal their crimes. Similarly, the People of the Book conceitedly thought that since they were the chosen people and were the descendents of Abraham (sws) and Isaac (sws), the fire of Hell would not touch them. In the first place, they would not even be cast into Hell and if someone among them had to bear it, then that too would only be for a few days. Eternal punishment was not for them in any case; such punishment was reserved only for other nations. It is on this conceited behaviour of theirs that Jesus (sws) had admonished them that they not show conceit on being the progeny of Abraham (sws) and that if his Lord wanted, he could create Abraham's progeny from stones.[27] It was while following the footsteps of these Jews that Muslims too regarded themselves to be forgiven people and had thereby absolved themselves of all the responsibilities related to faith and deeds. The matter reached the extent that there were many families among them in which if a person was born in was thought to be guaranteed Paradise and there were many graveyards in which if a person was buried was regarded to be worthy of the eternal kingdom regardless of his beliefs and deeds.

In the section of the verse: هُوَ اَعْلَمُ بِكُمْ اِذْ اَنْشَاَكُمْ مِّنَ الْاَرْضِ وَاِذْ اَنْتُمْ اَجِنَّةٌ فِيْ بُطُوْنِ اُمَّهٰتِكُمْ ۚ فَلَا تُزَكُّوْٓا اَنْفُسَكُمْ ۭ هُوَ اَعْلَمُ بِمَنِ اتَّقٰى all people who have this mentality are addressed and warned that they should not regard themselves to be holy and indulge in self-praise. God knows most the period of their lives in which He created them from the earth and also the period in which they remained in the form of embryos in the wombs of their mothers. The implication is that it is not befitting for a creature created from mud, mire and water and then nurtured in the womb after a lowly fluid is poured forth into it regard itself to be worthy of high status and absolve itself of treading the path of righteousness and virtue. Every person knows that he was created from a very despicable fluid and was initially raised in the constricted tract of His mother's womb. For this reason, he should not expect himself to be regarded superior merely on the basis of his physical form. Any status he can acquire can only be on the basis of faith and virtue and it is

27. See, for example: Matthew, 3:9.

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God who has the most knowledge of this. It is He who will measure things by His scale and grant each person the status he deserves. Before this assessment is made, no one has the right to proclaim his high status to other people. This subject will also be discussed in verses 38 and 39 of Sūrah al-Ma'ārij. *Inshā'Allāh*, a further explanation will be furnished in them.

The degrading way in which human existence is mentioned in this verse needs to be kept in consideration as well as the scorn on a person's claim to holiness and superiority in the words فَلَا تُزَكُّوْٓا اَنْفُسَكُمْ. After this, one should deliberate on the beliefs of *waḥdat al-wujūd* of our Sufis as per which man is a part of God and will one day merge into Him and in this manner a drop by merging into an ocean will become an ocean. If man is really a part of God, then did the Almighty refer to one His parts, God forbid, in such a degrading way in this verse?

Then further deliberation is needed on the fact that regarding one self as superior merely because of physical form has been regarded as self-praise by God while, on the other hand, these Sufis chant: سبحانی سبحانی ما أعظم شانی (I am pure and flawless! What majesty I have! Exalted is my majesty).[28] Can a person who has even an iota of faith in him make this highly arrogant and supercilious claim about his self? However, since the Sufis instead of receiving guidance from the Qur'ān and Ḥadīth have received it from the *bātaniyyah*, extremist Shiites and the Brahmans are guilty of introducing their evil creed into Islam and there are so many foolish people who repeat these sentences even though they are totally unaware of their meanings.

اَفَرَءَيْتَ الَّذِىْ تَوَلّٰى ﴿٣٣﴾ وَاَعْطٰى قَلِيْلًا وَّاَكْدٰى ﴿٣٤﴾ اَعِنْدَهٗ عِلْمُ الْغَيْبِ فَهُوَ يَرٰى ﴿٣٥﴾[29]

Here the Almighty has portrayed the character of people who do not have the courage to spend in His cause and if ever they do give something it is in a perfunctory manner, yet claim that they will be granted a high status by Him in the Hereafter. Do they have a telescope which is capable of seeing the matters of the unseen world through which they can observe the high rank and status which have been reserved for them?

Our exegetes generally regard الَّذِىْ to be a reference to Walīd ibn al-Mughīrah,[30] a chief of the Quraysh tribe. They also relate an incident about him saying that he had expressed his intention to embrace Islam but when one of his companions came to know of this intention he was told by this companion not to if he was embracing the

28. See, for example: Abū al-Farj 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn 'Alī ibn Muḥammad, *Talbīs-i iblīs*, 1st ed. (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-'Arabī, 1405 AH), 417.

29. Did you see the one who turned his back, gave a little and then held back? Has he the knowledge of the Unseen; thus he is seeing it.

30. See for example: Al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmi' al-bayān*, vol. 27, 70.

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faith because of fear for the Hereafter. He told him that if he deposited a certain amount of money with him, he would ensure saving him from the danger of the Hereafter; on this assurance, Walīd gave up his plan to embrace Islam and promised him to pay the said amount; however, later on, after giving him some part of the amount refused to pay the rest.

Though this incident has been cited by all our exegetes, in the first place it does not have a sound chain of narration, and if it is supposed that this incident is true, even then one fails to comprehend its relationship with these verses. If it is supposed that Walīd did not fulfil his promise, then has the Qur'ān rebuked him here for not fulfilling his promise?

The fact is that since the word الَّذِیْ generally qualifies a proper noun, wherever our exegetes find الَّذِیْ or الَّتِی, they start looking for a person whom these words qualify. In this quest, they have to make up an incident however inapt and unrelated to the occasion and context of the discourse it may be.

I have presented many examples in this exegesis to show that الَّذِیْ or الَّتِی at all places do nor refer to a specific man or woman; at certain instances, they are used to portray a parable too. At such instances, the purpose is to present the collective character of a group; however, it is portrayed in a specific form to people. I would here refer to one of the examples which can be seen in the previous *sūrahs*. Consider the following verse of Sūrah al-Naḥl: وَلَا تَكُوْنُوْا كَالَّتِیْ نَقَضَتْ غَزْلَهَا مِنْۢ بَعْدِ قُوَّةٍ اَنْكَاثًا. (۹۲:۱٦) (do not, like the woman who unravels the thread she has firmly spun, (16:92)). One can see the word الَّتِیْ is mentioned; however, it does not refer to a specific old lady so that one may start investigating her name, family and whereabouts and to find out about how she was making yarn from cotton and why would she undo what she had made; all these efforts are needless because the reference here is not to a specific old lady; it is to a supposed symbolic character.

In a similar manner, a hypothetical character is portrayed to the Idolaters of Arabia. These Idolaters did not have the courage to spend in the cause of God but on the basis of intercession of their self-claimed deities and due to conceit of their racial superiority claimed that just as they had a high status in this world, they would be blessed with this same status in the Hereafter if ever it came. In the mirror of this portrayal, Walīd ibn al-Mughīrah and Abū Jahl as well as other miserly yet affluent people of the Quraysh could see their own faces. They were the ones who would desist from responding to the calls of the Prophet (sws) to spend for the cause of God but would think that they had the keys of Paradise in their control.

The style of the discourse in these verses is disparaging and sarcastic: Look at these foolish people who run away from spending in the cause of God; even if they do so out of shame, then too it is in a perfunctory manner but claim that they will be given a high status in the Hereafter; in other words, it is as if they are able to see even from this world the affluence and luxury they will be given in Paradise.

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The word اَكْدٰى is from the idiom اَكْدَى الحافر which means that such a big rock was encountered by a digger that breaking it was difficult for him. Portrayed here is the general attitude of the miserly: if they spend out of compulsion, they spend very little and at that time are overcome by stinginess so much that they clench their fists and if anyone tries to urge them to spend, they launch an onslaught on him and remark: how much should we spend; get aside; I have already squandered a lot of money for this purpose. The verse: يَقُوْلُ اَهْلَكْتُ مَالًا لُّبَدًا.(٦:٩٠) (I have wasted heaps of money, (90:6)) portrays the character of such stingy people.

اَمْ لَمْ يُنَبَّاْ بِمَا فِيْ صُحُفِ مُوْسٰى ﴿٣٦﴾ وَ اِبْرٰهِيْمَ الَّذِيْ وَفّٰٓى ﴿٣٧﴾ اَلَّا تَزِرُ وَازِرَةٌ وِّزْرَ اُخْرٰى ﴿٣٨﴾[31]

The implication of these verses is that these people are dreaming of ending up in Paradise relying merely on the intercession of their alleged deities; have not the teachings of the scriptures of Moses (sws) and Abraham (sws) reached them that in the Hereafter no soul shall bear the burden of another?

Here it needs to be kept in consideration that the addressees here are primarily the Quraysh and secondarily the People of the Book. The latter claimed to be the followers of both Abraham (sws) and Moses (sws); similarly, the former regarded Abraham (sws) to be an elder of their family and their religious leader. For this reason both these great messengers of God are mentioned with great emphasis.

The Prophet Abraham (sws) is referred to by the attribute الَّذِيْ وَفّٰى which means that he followed every directive of God in letter and in spirit and fulfilled his promise and who passed every test and trial in an outstanding way. In Sūrah al-Baqarah, the words are: وَاِذِ ابْتَلٰٓى اِبْرٰهٖمَ رَبُّهٗ بِكَلِمٰتٍ فَاَتَمَّهُنَّ.(٢:١٢٤) (and recall when Abraham was put to trial by His Lord in a few things and he fulfilled all of them, (2:124)). The purpose of mentioning this attribute of Abraham (sws) to both the Quraysh and the People of the Book is to admonish them that the high status achieved by Abraham (sws) in this world and in the next was the result of showing complete obedience and faithfulness to God. On the other hand, their state of affairs is that without being obedient to God they want to win high favours merely because they are his descendents.

Here a question arises about the scripture of Abraham (sws) which this verse alludes to. The answer to this question is that he did not have a scripture in the formal sense of the term. All his teachings were transmitted orally as traditions to both branches of his progeny. They were kept more intact amongst the Israelites because prophets of God kept coming to them. The Ishmaelites were unlettered and for this reason they became very hazy about these traditions. Later on when the Torah was compiled, the history and teachings of Abraham (sws) were also collected in it. Though the Jews altered many of these teachings to suit their own interest to which we have alluded in the

31. Does he not know what is in the Scriptures of Moses and of Abraham – who befittingly passed every test he was put in; it is in the Scriptures that no soul shall bear another's burden

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exegesis of previous *sūrahs*, yet his basic teachings which are referred to here are still found in the Torah. For this reason, if by the scriptures of Abraham (sws) the reference is to the ones in which his teachings are mentioned, then this ascription would be absolutely correct.

The words اَلَّا تَزِرُ وَازِرَةٌ وِّزْرَ اُخْرٰى refer to the teaching which is present in the scriptures of Moses (sws) and Abraham (sws) that in the Hereafter no soul shall carry the burden of another; each will carry its own burden. This in fact is a refutation of the baseless concept of intercession which is the subject of this *sūrah*. This teaching is mentioned in the Torah and the Injil at so many instances that one wonders how in their presence the recipients of these Books were led away by Satan into polytheism. I have cited references to this teaching at a number of places in this *tafsīr* and repeating them here is not needed.

وَاَنْ لَّيْسَ لِلْاِنْسَانِ اِلَّا مَا سَعٰى ﴿٣٩﴾ وَاَنَّ سَعْيَهٗ سَوْفَ يُرٰى ﴿٤٠﴾ ثُمَّ يُجْزٰىهُ الْجَزَآءَ الْاَوْفٰى ﴿٤١﴾[32]

These verses further explain what is said previously: a person will only be rewarded in the Hereafter for what he himself did; no soul will be rewarded for the virtues of another or punished for the misdeeds of someone else. The implication is that if their forefathers were very pious, then they alone shall be rewarded for this piety; the reward of their forefathers will not be transferred to them so that by virtue of it they end up in Paradise. This principle is stated thus in Sūrah al-Baqarah: تِلْكَ أُمَّةٌ قَدْ خَلَتْ لَهَا مَا كَسَبَتْ وَلَكُمْ مَّا كَسَبْتُمْ. (١٣٤:٢) (that was a community which has passed away. They will get what they earned and you will get what you earn, (2:134)). If in lieu of the deeds done by a pious father, his children could go to Paradise then who could have been more pious than Noah (sws); however, in spite of Noah's prayer, the Almighty did not spare his son. Similarly, Abraham (sws) dubbed as *khalīlullāh* (the friend of God) prayed for his father but this prayer too was not accepted. The wife of Lot (sws) was indeed the wife of a great prophet of God but so unbiased is the law of God that even this relationship to a prophet could of no benefit to her. On the other hand, the wife of the Pharaoh was the wife of a great enemy of God; however, in Sūrah al-Taḥrīm (66:11), God has showered great praise on her. The relationships of father and son and husband and wife are the closest and most loving. No one can be closer to God than his prophets; however, as can be seen from these examples that even the closest relations of a prophet whose record was devoid of good deeds were not able to benefit from this relationship let alone others.

A person can benefit from the good deeds of another person in the Hereafter in two forms: firstly, this good deed should be based on a person's affectionate relationship of faith with another person: for example, if a believer prays to God for another

32. And that a man shall only receive that which he strove and that what he has earned shall soon be shown to him; he shall then be fully rewarded.

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believer, it is hoped that this prayer will be answered. Secondly, the person has some direct or indirect role in that good deed: for example, a believer taught a believer or became an exemplar of a teaching for the other person or had financially helped the other person in some way. If there is such a role of a person in the good deed of another person, then this is as if that person too had a share in earning it and is like a deed from which he too will benefit.

Some people having a socialistic mentality are of the opinion that here the Qur'ān acknowledges the principle that a person should earn what is commensurate to the work he put in. This interpretation has absolutely no relationship with the occasion and context of the verse and is in fact a wrong use of one's intelligence. For this reason, I do not want to deal here with an issue which has no bearing to the verse. However, in the exegesis of the previous *sūrahs*, I have dealt in detail with the basic philosophy of socialism, and will *inshā'Allāh* also explain some of its aspects at appropriate places of the coming *sūrahs*. This much, however, should be kept in mind here that the system of this world is based on trials and tests and in the next world issues will be settled on the basis of justice and rewards. A person has not been granted anything here because of the work he has put in to earn it; on the other hand, He has blessed some abundantly and some stringently and in this manner tested the gratefulness and patience of both. In the Hereafter, people who pass this trial will be rewarded for their good deeds and those who do not will be deprived of any reward; this failure of theirs will take them to Hell because in the Hereafter, the abode of such unsuccessful people is Hell.

The words وَ اَنَّ سَعْيَهٗ سَوْفَ يُرٰى. ثُمَّ يُجْزٰىهُ الْجَزَآءَ الْاَوْفٰى sound a warning that no one should deceive himself that what is said above is baseless: soon what a person has earned will come to the notice of God and then he will be duly rewarded or punished. These words are an assurance for the believers and a warning to those who disbelieve in the reward and punishment of the Hereafter: the believers should rest assured that the smallest of their good deeds shall be taken notice of and the disbelievers should remain aware that their smallest of evil deeds shall not be ignored.

وَ اَنَّ اِلٰى رَبِّكَ الْمُنْتَهٰى ﴿۴۲﴾[33]

The implication of this verse is that it should remain clear that everyone will end up with God. No one should remain under the misconception that he has some other being to whom he can turn so that he be saved from accountability before God or that being will be able to appeal against the decisions of God. Everyone will be brought before God and all decisions of God will be final and irrevocable.

وَ اَنَّهٗ هُوَ اَضْحَكَ وَ اَبْكٰى ﴿۴۳﴾ وَ اَنَّهٗ هُوَ اَمَاتَ وَ اَحْيَا ﴿۴۴﴾ وَ اَنَّهٗ خَلَقَ الزَّوْجَيْنِ الذَّكَرَ وَ الْاُنْثٰى ﴿۴۵﴾ مِنْ نُّطْفَةٍ اِذَا تُمْنٰى ﴿۴۶﴾ وَ

33. And that all things shall in the end return to God.

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اَنَّ عَلَيۡهِ النَّشۡاَةَ الۡاُخۡرٰى ﴿۴۷﴾ [34]

Mentioned in these verses is the reason because of which God is the Lord of everyone: it is in His authority to make someone laugh or cry; in other words, it is only He Who creates the circumstances for joy and only He Who creates the circumstances for sorrow. Happiness and sadness are solely under His control. Grief and anguish and harm and benefit are under His sole authority. If this is so, then on what basis can someone else become the Lord of people?

Similarly, it is only in God's authority to grant life and death. So if no one has any say or authority in giving life or death, then what is the basis of regarding someone other than God as the Lord?

It is God Who has created the counterparts of a pair: man and woman. It is not that the man was created by someone and woman by someone else. Similarly, it is not that sons are granted by someone and daughters by someone else. So when there is no such possibility of such division, then what is the sense in regarding someone else as Lord?

Man and woman are created by a drop of fluid which is poured forth. After this is done, no one knows what will happen to it as far as its growth and development are concerned. No one knows whether it will produce a boy or a girl, whether it will produce something at all or will remain incomplete. The looks and shape of the human being ultimately formed are also not in the knowledge of any person. All these details are only known to the great creator Who has knowledge of all things and Who nurtures this fluid within multifarious layers and brings it forth in the form of a child after a specific time period. He then is responsible for the growth and development of this child which may be a boy or a girl. They mature into a man and a woman. When all this is only in God's control, then what is the meaning of requesting someone else to grant children?

The words وَاَنَّ عَلَيۡهِ النَّشۡاَةَ الۡاُخۡرٰى refer to the fact that when it is God alone Who creates every one from a drop of fluid, then will it be difficult for Him to recreate them? Not only the possibility of this recreation is obvious but also the need for it to happen is also obvious so that God's justice and mercy can completely manifest themselves. So when both these things are obvious, the wisdom of God necessitates that He bring forth a day when everyone be raised to life again – a day on which He evaluates their good and evil deeds and rewards and punishes them accordingly.

All these points with slight variations are present in the declaration of acquittal made by Abraham (sws) against his people when he left them. This declaration is

34. And that, indeed, it is He Who makes [people] laugh and makes [them] weep, and it is He Who gives death and He Who gives life and it is He Who created the two spouses the male and the female from a drop when it is poured forth and that upon Him is the second bringing forth.

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mentioned in Sūrah al-Shu'arā' in the following words:

الَّذِیْ خَلَقَنِیْ فَهُوَ یَهْدِیْنِ. وَ الَّذِیْ هُوَ یُطْعِمُنِیْ وَ یَسْقِیْنِ. وَ اِذَا مَرِضْتُ فَهُوَ یَشْفِیْنِ. وَ الَّذِیْ یُمِیْتُنِیْ ثُمَّ یُحْیِیْنِ. وَ الَّذِیْٓ اَطْمَعُ اَنْ یَّغْفِرَ لِیْ خَطِیْٓـَٔتِیْ یَوْمَ الدِّیْنِ. (۲۶: ۷۸-۸۲)

Who has created me; then he guides me and provides me with food and drink; who, when I am sick, makes me healthy; who will cause me to die and then bring me back to life; who, I hope, will forgive me my sins on the Day of Judgement. (26:78-82)

وَاَنَّهٗ هُوَ اَغْنٰی وَ اَقْنٰی ﴿۴۸﴾ وَاَنَّهٗ هُوَ رَبُّ الشِّعْرٰی ﴿۴۹﴾[35]

It is God alone Who transforms a person's state of poverty to one in which his needs are fulfilled and from whomsoever He wants, He blesses him with so much more than his needs that he becomes a wealthy person. The word اَقْنٰی is from قنیة which is used for accumulated wealth. So the word اَغْنٰی is used for those people who have come out of their state of poverty, and اَقْنٰی is used for people who have not merely come out of their state of poverty, but for those who have become affluent. In verses 33 and 34 above, the character of those rich people is referred to who, though do not spend in the cause of God, dream of high ranks in Paradise. This verse actually admonishes such people that the wealth and riches they have are from God. They are not from Sirius the star as they reckon. It is God Who is the Lord of Sirius too.

Sirius appears in the spring season. The idolaters of Arabia regarded it to be very blessed and would attribute the lushness of spring as well as their own trade activities to it. A poet of the age of ignorance while praising a praiseworthy person says:

شامس فی القر حتی اذا ما
ذکت الشعری فبرد وظل
Shāmisuṇ fi al-qurri ḥattā idhā mā
Dhakat al-shi'rā fa barduṇ was ẓilluṇ

(He brings heat to people in cool winters and when Sirius appears [in the spring season], he becomes a source of coolness and shade for people).[36]

Here, one needs to keep in consideration, the discussion found in the very first verse of this *sūrah*: these stars which these foolish people think as the carvers of their fortune bear witness through their own setting and falling that only God is their Lord.

35. And that it is He who bestowed and enriched and it is He who is the Lord of Sirius as well.

36. Al-Tabrayzī, *Dīwān al-ḥamāsah*, vol. 1, 343.

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It is not necessary that all the things mentioned above be referenced in the scriptures of Moses (sws) and Abraham (sws); they are extensions to the original. There are several examples in the Qur'ān in which a statement is cited and then certain additions are made in it which though are not part of the statement yet are based on it. This explains the whole scenario and the discourse is brought in accordance with the circumstances. In my opinion, this has what happened here as well. From verse 40 onwards, the discourse forms an extension which has made it a comment on the Quraysh as well.

وَاَنَّهٗۤ اَهۡلَكَ عَادَا الۡاُوۡلٰى ﴿۵۰﴾ وَثَمُوۡدَا فَمَاۤ اَبۡقٰى ﴿۵۱﴾ وَقَوۡمَ نُوۡحٍ مِّنۡ قَبۡلُ ؕ اِنَّهُمۡ كَانُوۡا هُمۡ اَظۡلَمَ وَاَطۡغٰى ؕ ﴿۵۲﴾[37]

These verses are also part of the extended discourse. By citing historical references, the Quraysh are warned that just as today they are being warned, in a similar manner the peoples of the 'Ād and the Thamūd from among this land were also warned by their respective messengers and before them the people of Noah (sws) too. However, these people paid no heed to these warnings. At last, all of them were destroyed by the Almighty and no one from among them remained. The implication is that the Quraysh too will meet the same fate if they follow in their footsteps. The law of God is equal for all; their own history bears reference to this. The 'Ād here are called as the ancient or the first 'Ād. The reason for this is that the Thamūd were their descendents and were also known as the second 'Ād.

The words اِنَّهُمۡ كَانُوۡا هُمۡ اَظۡلَمَ وَاَطۡغٰى do not merely relate to the people of Noah (sws). They also relate to the 'Ād and the Thamūd. The destruction they faced was not because God was unjust to them; on the contrary, it was because they were unjust to their own souls and were a very rebellious people. The implication is that the real reasons for the destruction of a nation are not external; they arise from within it and take the form of earthquakes, floods and storms and at times manifest themselves as attacks from an enemy.

وَالۡمُؤۡتَفِكَةَ اَهۡوٰى ﴿۵۳﴾ فَغَشّٰىهَا مَا غَشّٰى ﴿۵۴﴾[38]

This is a reference to the people of Lot. The word مُؤۡتَفِكَةٌ is explained thus in the *Lisān al-'arab*:

> The مُؤۡتَفِكَاتٌ refer to those winds which totally turn a place topsy turvy the way a harvester turns a cultivated land topsy turvy. When a new flood comes and it deposits a layer of mud and sand on the earth, then this too is called مُؤۡتَفِكَةٌ.

37. And it is He who destroyed the ancient 'Ād and the Thamud also, thus sparing no one, and before them the people of Noah also. Indeed, they were very unjust and rebellious,

38. And [He] also routed the overthrown cities. Thus there covered them that which did cover them.

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Analogously, the tempestuous wind which covers the earth with pebbles and sand is also called مُؤْتَفِكَةٌ.[39]

The Almighty unleashed on the people of Lot a dust-laden wind which after picking up speed became a pebble-hurling wind (*ḥāṣib*). As a result, at first, pebbles and stones rained down on them and then the wind became so strong that it overturned buildings. While referring to the fate of the people of Lot (sws), the Qur'an has said: فَمِنْهُمْ مَّنْ اَرْسَلْنَا عَلَيْهِ حَاصِبًا. (٤٠:٢٩) (on some, We sent down a stone-hurling wind, (29:40)). At another instance, the words are: فَجَعَلْنَا عَالِيَهَا سَافِلَهَا وَاَمْطَرْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ حِجَارَةً مِّنْ سِجِّيْلٍ. (٧٤:١٥) (We turned this settlement upside down, and We rained upon them stones of clay, (15:74)).

I have explained the style adopted in فَغَشّٰهَا مَا غَشّٰى at a number of places. It is used to portray a situation which is beyond words. The implication is that it was covered with something which is beyond words.

فَبِاَيِّ اٰلَآءِ رَبِّكَ تَتَمَارٰى ﴿٥٥﴾[40]

The Quraysh are addressed here. Though the pronoun is in the singular, yet the whole community is addressed. When a community is addressed in the singular in this manner, the purpose is to warn each and every individual belonging to it. This is the case here as well. Each and every disbeliever is addressed and told that these arguments which substantiate reward and punishment are before them. They are drawn from both reason and revelation, from the scriptures of Moses (sws) and Abraham (sws) and from the history of the nations related to them. So how many a sign of their Lord will they deny and how much will they dispute with Him?

The word اٰلَآءِ is the plural of إِلَى. Our exegetes have generally interpreted it to mean "favours and blessings;" however, this is an incomplete meaning of the word. Its real meaning is miracles, signs, marvels of nature, feats, relics and signs of wisdom. Since favours and blessings also come under these, they are also regarded to be its meaning; nevertheless, at every place, it is not proper to translate this word in this sense because like favours the signs of favours are also included in the meaning of this word. This word repeatedly occurs in Sūrah al-Raḥmān and all its nuances are evident there. I will explain it and its usage there in the light of classical Arabic literature. My mentor, Ḥamīd al-Dīn Farāhī has presented his scholarly research on this word in his *Mufradāt al-Qur'ān*.[41]

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39. Muḥammad ibn Mukarram ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān al-'arab*, 1st ed., vol. 10 (Beirut: Dār ṣādir, n.d.), 391.

40. Now, which of your Lord's marvels will you deny!

41. Ḥamīd al-Dīn al-Farāhī, *Mufradāt al-Qur'ān*, 1st ed. (Azamgarh: Maṭba' Iṣlāḥ, 1358 AH), 11.

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Section IV: (Verses 56-62)

Coming up are the closing verses of the *sūrah*. Here, at the end, as per the conventional style of the Qur'ān, the same subject with which the *sūrah* began is brought up as a reminder. It was said at the beginning that this Qur'ān should not be disregarded by considering it to be the discourse of soothsayers and astrologers; it is a divine revelation and the word of God. Like the warners of previous times, it is another warner of a similar nature. They should not regard what it is warning them of as something far off; the promised hour is near, and when it appears no one except God will be able to ward it off. They should not make fun of this discourse. It is not something to make jest of; it is something to weep about. They should wake up, prostrate before God alone and serve Him only. In the light of this background, readers may now proceed to read these verses.

Text and Translation

فَغَشّٰىهَا مَا غَشّٰى ﴿٥٤﴾ فَبِاَيِّ اٰلَآءِ رَبِّكَ تَتَمَارٰى ﴿٥٥﴾ هٰذَا نَذِيْرٌ مِّنَ النُّذُرِ الْاُوْلٰى ﴿٥٦﴾ اَزِفَتِ الْاٰزِفَةُ ﴿٥٧﴾ لَيْسَ لَهَا
مِنْ دُوْنِ اللّٰهِ كَاشِفَةٌ ﴿٥٨﴾ اَفَمِنْ هٰذَا الْحَدِيْثِ تَعْجَبُوْنَ ﴿٥٩﴾ وَتَضْحَكُوْنَ وَلَا تَبْكُوْنَ ﴿٦٠﴾ وَاَنْتُمْ سٰمِدُوْنَ ﴿٦١﴾
فَاسْجُدُوْا لِلّٰهِ وَاعْبُدُوْا ﴿٦٢﴾

This is a warner like those before. What is near has come near. No one except God can avert it. So do you express wonder at this discourse! And laugh and not weep and are in a trance! [Wake up!] Prostrate your self before God alone and worship Him only. (56-62)

Explanation

هٰذَا نَذِيْرٌ مِّنَ النُّذُرِ الْاُوْلٰى ﴿٥٦﴾[42]

The demonstrative pronoun هٰذَا refers to the Qur'ān. Since the whole discussion began with the Qur'ān, hence without mentioning it here at the end it is spontaneously referred to so that the relationship between the beginning and the end becomes evident. If someone regards the Prophet (sws) as the antecedent of this pronoun, it would not make much of a difference because the message delivered by the Qur'ān and the Prophet (sws) are not two distinct things. At one place in Sūrah al-Ṭalāq (65:10), the words ذِكْرًا رَّسُوْلًا occur for the Qur'ān. Obviously, the word ذِكْرًا refers to the Qur'ān and the word رَسُوْلًا to the Prophet (sws); however, the style adopted is such that

42. This is a warner like those before.

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both are in the capacity of a single entity.

I have already presented my research on the word نُذُرِ at some place in this exegesis. Here it is used as a plural of نَذِيرٌ and refers to all the previous prophets and scriptures. The purpose is to admonish the addressees that they should not take this discourse to be a jest or joke; if they make fun of it, they should remember that they will face its consequences in the very manner the previous nations faced them.

اَزِفَتِ الْاٰزِفَةُ ﴿۵۷﴾ لَيْسَ لَهَا مِنْ دُوْنِ اللّٰهِ كَاشِفَةٌ ﴿۵۸﴾ [43]

The word اَزِفَتِ means something which has come near and refers to the divine punishment of which the Qur'ān was warning these people: they should not consider it to be far off; it is now looming over their heads.

I have referred to the divine practice at many places in this exegesis that when a messenger of God is sent to warn a nation, it is only given enough respite in which the truth is conclusively communicated to it. As soon as this period expires, that nation is destroyed if it persists in its denial of the messenger. This divine punishment is a prelude for this nation to the punishment they will be meted out in the Hereafter. For this reason, these words depict the absolute reality from the tongue of the messenger and do not contain the slightest bit of exaggeration in them.

The words لَيْسَ لَهَا مِنْ دُوْنِ اللّٰهِ كَاشِفَةٌ warn these people that they must not remain haughtily content that their deities: Lāt, Manāt and 'Uzzā besides others will be of any benefit to them when this punishment comes and will be able to save them from it. They should remember that except for God no one will be able to get rid of it.

اَفَمِنْ هٰذَا الْحَدِيْثِ تَعْجَبُوْنَ ﴿۵۹﴾ وَتَضْحَكُوْنَ وَلَا تَبْكُوْنَ ﴿۶۰﴾ [44]

Amazement is expressed here at their attitude: they express wonder at the warnings sounded by a Book which is informing them of such a great punishment and telling them why and from where will it come. They should beware that this thing is not something to laugh at or make fun of; it is something to cry about and be very anxious of; however, instead of crying, they are laughing at it.

وَاَنْتُمْ سٰمِدُوْنَ ﴿۶۱﴾ [45]

The words سمد and سمود mean "to be unconscious and senseless." The verse says that this Book is trying to shake and jolt them, while they are overcome with the slumber of indifference.

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43. What is near has come near. No one except God can avert it.
44. So do you express wonder at this discourse! And laugh and not weep.
45. And are in a trance! [Wake up!]

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فَاسْجُدُوْا لِلّٰهِ وَاعْبُدُوْا ﴿٦٢﴾[46]

The implication of the verse is that if they want to escape danger, they should awaken themselves from this slumber and, forsaking other deities, only prostrate themselves before God and serve and worship Him only. No one except Him will be able to save them from this calamity.

This *sūrah* began with the falling and setting of stars and it ends on prostration and worship to God alone. I am thankful to God that with these lines I come to the end of this *sūrah's* exegesis. فَالْحَمْدُ لِلّٰهِ عَلٰى ذٰلِكَ (so gratitude be to God for this).

Raḥmānābād,
22nd July, 1977 AD
6th Sha'bān 1397 AH

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46. Prostrate your self before God alone and serve Him only.

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Tadabbur i Qur’ān

Sūrah al-Qamar (54)

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Surah al-Qamar

Central Theme and Relationship with the Previous *Sūrahs*

This *sūrah* begins with the topic the previous *sūrah* ended on. The previous *sūrah* ends on the words: اَزِفَتِ الْاٰزِفَةُ (٥٣:٥٧) (what is near has drawn near, (53:57)) and this *sūrah* begins with the words: اِقْتَرَبَتِ السَّاعَةُ وَانْشَقَّ الْقَمَرُ (the hour of punishment is near and the moon is split asunder). In other words, the brevity found in اَزِفَتِ الْاٰزِفَةُ is elaborated by it. Besides this similarity, there is another very clear apparent similarity between the two *sūrahs.* In the previous *sūrah*, the rising and setting of stars is presented as evidence over a claim and in this *sūrah* this evidence is presented with the moon splitting asunder.

In this *sūrah*, the verse وَلَقَدْ يَسَّرْنَا الْقُرْاٰنَ لِلذِّكْرِ فَهَلْ مِنْ مُّدَّكِرٍ is repeated many times. Such repetitive verses in a *sūrah* occupy a special significance. It is as if the speaker every now and then, while presenting arguments, wants to remind his obdurate addressees and ask them the reason for being so stubborn and the reason why they do not reflect on the reality which is being put forth before them in the light of sound arguments.

The addressees of this *sūrah* are people who, in order to find a proof of the veracity of Qur'ānic warnings, were demanding a sign of this punishment that could convince them of these warnings. The history of denial by previous nations – which is alluded to in the previous *sūrah* as well – is recounted before them in relatively more detail and they are asked to learn a lesson from their fate. Why are they insisting that they will believe only when they see the punishment hovering over their heads? They must realize that it is God's great favour to them that instead of showing a sign of the punishment, He revealed such a Book to them that had all the necessary features to comprehensively teach and remind them and remove their doubts. Alas! Instead of asking for God's mercy, they were asking for His punishment.

Analysis of the Discourse

Verses (1-8): The Prophet (sws) has been assured that he should not pay any heed to the stubborn and obstinate people who were demanding to see the doom they had been promised. The greatest of signs shall not induce them to accept faith because they do not follow sense and reason; instead they are the followers of their whims and desires. The anecdotes about the fate of various earlier nations should be a big lesson for them, but unfortunately they do not have the ability to learn from history. The Prophet (sws) is further consoled that they will not pay heed to his Message; he should leave their

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matter to the summoner who, on the Day of Judgement shall be summoning them not to the Qur'ān but to Hell. They shall respond to his call, emerging from their graves like locusts scattered about.

Verses (9-42): The Quraysh have been directed to learn a lesson from the fate of the people of Noah, (sws) the 'Ād, Thamūd, Lot (sws) and Pharaoh. These people, like the Quraysh, also rejected their respective prophets, and the Quraysh very well know what happened to them. If the Quraysh also follow in their footsteps, they will meet a similar fate. They must bear in mind that it is a great blessing of the Almighty that He has revealed the Qur'ān to warn them of this danger beforehand. He has made it easy for them so they can seek a lesson from it and be reminded. Instead of acknowledging this favour of the Almighty and benefiting from it, it is their extreme misfortune that they are asking for punishment.

Verses (43-55): The Quraysh have been cautioned that when in the past the Almighty has never spared the disbelievers, they should not consider themselves an exception to this rule. Are they of some special and exalted breed that they shall be spared? Do they reckon that the Almighty has written a directive of acquittal for them in the Hereafter in the heavenly scriptures, and do they think that they shall be able to defend themselves against God in the Hereafter? If they have such foolish ideas, they must remember that the Almighty shall never treat the disbelievers and the righteous equally. He shall punish the disbelievers by throwing them into Hell and reward the righteous with Paradise.

Section I: Verses (1-8)

Text and Translation

بِسۡمِ اللّٰہِ الرَّحۡمٰنِ الرَّحِیۡمِ

اِقۡتَرَبَتِ السَّاعَۃُ وَ انۡشَقَّ الۡقَمَرُ ﴿۱﴾ وَ اِنۡ یَّرَوۡا اٰیَۃً یُّعۡرِضُوۡا وَ یَقُوۡلُوۡا سِحۡرٌ مُّسۡتَمِرٌّ ﴿۲﴾ وَ کَذَّبُوۡا وَ اتَّبَعُوۡۤا اَہۡوَآءَہُمۡ وَ کُلُّ اَمۡرٍ مُّسۡتَقِرٌّ ﴿۳﴾ وَ لَقَدۡ جَآءَہُمۡ مِّنَ الۡاَنۡۢبَآءِ مَا فِیۡہِ مُزۡدَجَرٌ ﴿۴﴾ حِکۡمَۃٌۢ بَالِغَۃٌ فَمَا تُغۡنِ النُّذُرُ ﴿۵﴾ فَتَوَلَّ عَنۡہُمۡ ۘ یَوۡمَ یَدۡعُ الدَّاعِ اِلٰی شَیۡءٍ نُّکُرٍ ﴿۶﴾ خُشَّعًا اَبۡصَارُہُمۡ یَخۡرُجُوۡنَ مِنَ الۡاَجۡدَاثِ کَاَنَّہُمۡ جَرَادٌ مُّنۡتَشِرٌ ﴿۷﴾ مُّہۡطِعِیۡنَ اِلَی الدَّاعِ ؕ یَقُوۡلُ الۡکٰفِرُوۡنَ ہٰذَا یَوۡمٌ عَسِرٌ ﴿۸﴾

In the name of God, the Most-Gracious, the Ever-Merciful.

The hour of punishment has arrived and the moon is cleft asunder. And whatever sign they see, they will only evade it and remark: "This is a magic not new." And they denied and followed their fancies and every matter has an appointed time. And the anecdotes of the past have reached them which have a lot of lessons and profound wisdom. But of what use are these warnings? So, ignore them and wait for the day in

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which a summoner will summon them to a very undesirable thing. Their eyes shall be downcast and they shall come out of their graves like locusts scattered about, hastening towards the summoner. At that time, the disbelievers will cry: "This is, indeed, a ruthless day!" (1-8)

Explanation

اِقۡتَرَبَتِ السَّاعَةُ وَانۡشَقَّ الۡقَمَرُ ﴿۱﴾[1]

The word السَّاعَةُ refers to the time of judgement and the punishment of which the Quraysh have been warned in all the *sūrahs* of this group and specially jolted and shaken to pay heed to it in the previous *sūrah* by the words: اَزِفَتِ الۡاٰزِفَةُ. (۵۷:۵۳) (what is near has drawn near, (53:57)). They must not regard this hour to be distant; they must wake up from their slumber and try to save themselves from its horrors by following only the plan they are being given.

I have been explaining at various instances in this exegesis that the messengers of God warned their people of two punishments: the punishment which a nation necessarily faces in this world if it does not pay heed to the warnings of its messenger and becomes adamant in denying him and the punishment which it will face in the Hereafter. The only difference between the two punishments is that of the beginning and the end or the prelude and the culmination. The nation which is seized by the punishment of denying its messenger is in fact seized for the punishment of the Hereafter. For this reason, at times, the word السَّاعَةُ consists of both these punishments. Viewed thus, the time of judgement has drawn near for every nation to whom a messenger is sent. In other words, the statement اِقۡتَرَبَتِ السَّاعَةُ is not an exaggeration; it portrays a fact.

The words وَانۡشَقَّ الۡقَمَرُ state a sign of the hour of punishment drawing near. I have been referring to an established practice of God at many places of this exegesis: in every nook and corner of this universe exist the signs of God's power and wisdom and every now and then, new signs appear. However, in the times of the messengers, the Almighty specially reveals certain signs which substantiate the warnings of the respective messenger as well as his claim to messengerhood. The Qur'ān mentions this established practice at various places. As an example, consider the verse: سَنُرِيۡهِمۡ اٰيٰتِنَا فِى الۡاٰفَاقِ وَفِىۡۤ اَنۡفُسِهِمۡ (۵۳:۴۱) (We will show them Our signs in all the regions of the earth and in their own souls, (41:53)). The purpose of these signs, as I have indicated, is to strengthen the warnings delivered by the messenger. The facts which are openly proclaimed by him are substantiated by various signs which manifest themselves in various forms so that people are left with no excuse to deny the truth. One of these signs, in order to substantiate the warnings of the Prophet (sws), manifested itself in

1. The hour of punishment has arrived and the moon is cleft asunder.

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the form of cleaving asunder of the moon. The purpose was to make it clear upon the addressees that the scenario which the Qur'ān mentions viz. the shaking of the earth, the gliding in the air of crushed mountains, the crossing of boundaries by the oceans and the darkening of the sun are not meant merely to strike awe; these are definite occurrences which will happen one day. They are not improbable: their proofs keep appearing in some form in this world.

It is not necessary that a messenger present such signs as miracles; they can appear without any proclamation and without throwing any challenge. It is not even necessary that the disbelievers demand the specific sign they are shown; it could be shown to them without their demand merely to dispel the doubts created by them. The reason that the disbelievers regarded the Hereafter to be far-fetched was that they reckoned it impossible that one day the whole universe would be wrecked and destroyed. Their question cited by the Qur'ān regarding the mountains shows that they regarded them to be eternal and everlasting. By showing the sign of the moon cleaving asunder, the Almighty has informed them that none of the objects of this universe, however huge it may be, is independent or immortal; everything is subservient to His directive; He can destroy it whenever He wants to.

As far as the question of such an incident taking place at the time of the Prophet (sws) is concerned, it is evident from the Qur'ān and corroborated by Ḥadīth in my view that such an incident did take place. The Aḥādīth do vary as to the nature of the incident but there is no difference of opinion in that the event took place. Some people are of the opinion that this is merely the information of an incident that will take place on the Day of Judgement; it is mentioned in the past tense to express its certainty. They translate the verse as: "The Day of Judgement has drawn near and the moon will cleave asunder." Though this opinion is also ascribed to some earlier authorities and is held by some people of these times as well, yet the context hinders this interpretation. There is no doubt that the events which will happen on the Day of Judgement are mentioned in the Qur'ān in the past tense; however, if the verse is translated thus, it will bear no relationship with the next verse. The next verse says that whatever sign they will see will have no effect on them and they will show indifference to it; they will say that there is nothing unique in it and is in fact magic which is not new. A little deliberation shows that if this cleaving asunder of the moon was related to the Hereafter, there was no purpose or occasion for stating what has just been cited. On the Day of Judgement the staunchest of disbelievers will not be able to regard this as magic; everyone will acknowledge that each and every fact given by the messengers has come true word for word. Thus the words of a subsequent verse are: يَقُوْلُ الْكٰفِرُوْنَ هٰذَا يَوْمٌ عَسِرٌ. (٨:٥٣) (At that time, the disbelievers will cry: "This is, indeed, a ruthless day!" (53:8)).

There is no room to express the doubt that had such an incident taken place, it should have been mentioned in the history of other nations. There are so many

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incidents related to our own earth and to other planets in which pieces are destroyed or they break away or are pulled in but in earlier times their observation was limited to a certain sphere. In current times, international observatories and research institutes have been established to investigate such phenomena. Hence as soon as an incident takes place, these institutes immediately take notice of it and in no time inform people round the world of what has happened. In earlier times, such means of research and informing others were non-existent and for this reason the news of such events was confined to a certain sphere. However, this sphere in itself belongs to reliable people; hence, there is no reason to deny the happening of such an event. It is very probable that in coming times, scientists are able to investigate the moon in a more elaborate manner and it becomes evident through scientific research that a certain portion of the moon was part of a certain other portion and at a certain time it detached itself from it and became part of a certain other portion. These days many similar disclosures are being made every now and then about our earth and people believe them. So why should one express wonder at this news given by the Qur'ān about the moon? If science has yet to corroborate it, it only shows its limitation. One should wait and be patient; it is very possible that in future it is forced to acknowledge such a happening.

وَاِنْ يَّرَوْا اٰيَةً يُّعْرِضُوْا وَيَقُوْلُوْا سِحْرٌ مُّسْتَمِرٌّ ﴿٢﴾[2]

This verse sounds an assurance to the Prophet (sws) and rebukes the disbelievers: the real reason for their denial is not that they are not being shown a sign for numerous signs exist around them and every now and then new ones appear; however, these stubborn people do not want to believe in reward and punishment and for this reason do not learn a lesson from the greatest of signs. Even if the Prophet (sws) shows them a bigger sign than the cleaving asunder of the moon, they will disregard it by calling it to be a product of magic.

The word سِحْرٌ (magic) qualified by مُّسْتَمِرٌّ in this verse is meant to express the fact that not only will they call this sign a product of magic, but in order to fool people, they will also tell them that even this is nothing new and unique as to be given importance; such magic has been shown and taught by magicians of the past which they have continuously transmitted to later generations of magicians. In other words, what they meant was that on the basis of this sign, there is no reason to regard him as some extra-ordinary magician much less regard him a warner sent by God. Some people have interpreted the word مُّسْتَمِرٌّ to mean "mortal."[3] However, I am unable to find this meaning in the corpus of Arabic literature known to me.

2. And whatever sign they see, they will only evade it and remark: "This is a magic not new."

3. See, for example: Ibn Kathir, *Tafsir al-Qur'ān al-'Aẓim*, vol. 4, 264. (*Translator*)

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وَكَذَّبُوْا وَاتَّبَعُوْٓا اَهْوَآءَهُمْ ۭ وَكُلُّ اَمْرٍ مُّسْتَقِرٌّ ۝[4]

Mentioned in this verse is their denial, the reason for their denial and its consequences: the Quraysh have denied the warner sent by God and the warnings delivered by him and instead followed their own whims which made them worthy of punishment as per the established practice of God. However, to God each matter has an appointed time and a set plan. So when their period of respite ends, they shall be seized by Him. In other words, if they are being let off for the time being, it does not mean that the warnings of the Prophet (sws) are baseless; the fact of the matter is that the time is yet to come at which the Almighty has ordained destruction for them. Indeed, this time is drawing near.

The words وَاتَّبَعُوْٓا اَهْوَآءَهُمْ after وَكَذَّبُوْا point to the reason for their denial: if they denied the warnings of the Prophet (sws), it does not mean that they had some reason for this denial or have certain doubts about it which need to be clarified or they have not been shown a sign that can convince them; the only reason for this is that they are slaves to their desires. If they accept reward and punishment, they will have to abandon their desires, which they do not have the courage to do. For this reason, they are presenting various lame excuses. This subject has already been explained in detail in verse 29 of Sūrah al-Najm.

وَلَقَدْ جَاۗءَهُمْ مِّنَ الْاَنْۢبَاۗءِ مَا فِيْهِ مُزْدَجَرٌ ۝[5]

This verse further explains the previous one: if they have not yet faced God's punishment, it does not mean that there has been a change in the practice of God. Anecdotes about previous nations have been recounted to them; if they reflect on them, there are enough lessons to be learnt. They will come to know from these anecdotes that whichever nation denied the warnings of its messenger, was ultimately punished by God. Because of a delay in the coming of this punishment, these earlier nations too wrongly concluded that the warnings of their messengers were baseless; yet they finally came true. In other words, it is in their own interest to learn a lesson from history and not wait to believe at the time when it will be too late. Such a belated acknowledgement was neither of any benefit to the earlier nations nor will be of any benefit to them.

The anecdotes of previous nations have been mentioned both briefly and in detail in the previous *sūrahs*, and are coming up in this *sūrah* too from verse 9 onwards. Readers will see that at the end of every anecdote the words فَكَيْفَ كَانَ عَذَابِيْ وَنُذُرِ (how [dreadful] was My punishment, how [stern] was My warning?) are repeated to make it

4. And they denied and followed their fancies and every matter has an appointed time.

5. And the anecdotes of the past have reached them which have a lot of lessons and profound wisdom.

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clear on the addressees that in this manner the warnings of a messenger come true and in this manner his deniers are punished.

حِكْمَةٌۢ بَالِغَةٌ فَمَا تُغْنِ النُّذُرُ ۝ 6

These anecdotes contain absorbing wisdom; Alas! Of what benefit are these warnings to such people? The particle مَا can connote negation as well as interrogation; however, the latter usage has more emphasis in it and is also more in harmony with the context and occasion.

فَتَوَلَّ عَنْهُمْ ۘ يَوْمَ يَدْعُ الدَّاعِ اِلٰى شَيْءٍ نُّكُرٍ ۝ 7

This is a reassuring directive given to the Prophet (sws) that it is beyond him to guide such blind people. He should ignore them, and patiently wait for the day when Raphael will blow the trumpet and summon them to the punishment of the Hereafter.

The verb تَوَلَّ encompasses the meaning of اِنْتَظَرَ (wait). At a similar place, the words are: وَاسْتَمِعْ يَوْمَ يُنَادِ الْمُنَادِ مِنْ مَّكَانٍ قَرِيْبٍ. (٤١:٥٠) (and listen for the day when the crier will call from a place near, (50:41)). The word نُكُرٍ refers to the horrors of the Day of Judgment. In order to express the intensity of these horrors, a vague style is adopted. The implication is that today they are disregarding the calls given to them to prepare for that day, but soon the time will come when a caller will call them to its horrors and everyone will run towards it in compliance and in fear.

خُشَّعًا اَبْصَارُهُمْ يَخْرُجُوْنَ مِنَ الْاَجْدَاثِ كَاَنَّهُمْ جَرَادٌ مُّنْتَشِرٌ ۝ مُّهْطِعِيْنَ اِلَى الدَّاعِ ۭ يَقُوْلُ الْكٰفِرُوْنَ هٰذَا يَوْمٌ عَسِرٌ ۝ 8

Today the messenger of God is inviting them to prepare to save themselves from the horrors of that day; however, when the caller of the Day of Judgement will call them, they will emerge from their graves the way locusts do and their situation will be such that because of humiliation downcast will be their eyes and they will be swiftly running towards the caller.

The words خُشَّعًا and مُّهْطِعِيْنَ are accusatives of state (*hāl*). The expression كَاَنَّهُمْ جَرَادٌ مُّنْتَشِرٌ portrays the emerging of people from the grave after the trumpet is blown. One may have seen moths emerging in the rainy season at the onset of the evening. It is as if a storm of moths has appeared. The situation of locusts is no different and the same will be the case of people coming out of their graves. The Almighty has shown these

6. But of what use are these warnings?

7. So ignore them and wait for the day in which a summoner will summon them to a very undesirable thing.

8. Their eyes shall be downcast and they shall come out of their graves like locusts scattered about, hastening towards the summoner. At that time, the disbelievers will cry: "This is, indeed, a ruthless day!"

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signs to remind man of the Hereafter in every part of the heavens and the earth.

The meaning of the words يَقُوْلُ الْكٰفِرُوْنَ هٰذَا يَوْمٌ عَسِرٌ is that when the messenger of God warns them of the horrors of that Day, they regard it to be far-fetched and improbable, and they stubbornly make fun of it, yet when that Day will appear before them they will regretfully cry out that the severe day which the prophets and messengers of God had informed them of has arrived.

Section II: Verses (9-17)

In verse 4 above, the Quraysh have been asked why they are insisting on seeing the punishment and why they do not seek a lesson from the history of previous nations which has been narrated to them. In the coming section of verses, in order to explain this further, the history of the messengers and their people is mentioned. Like the Quraysh, these nations also made fun of the warnings sounded to them by their respective messengers; ultimately, they were seized by the punishment they had been warned of; so it is in their own interest not to call for their doom by blindly following in the footsteps of these nations and instead be reminded by the Book of God revealed through His special grace for the purpose of their education and instruction. This Book is fully equipped with everything needed to educate and remind them.

Readers may now proceed to read the next section of verses.

Text and Translation

كَذَّبَتْ قَبْلَهُمْ قَوْمُ نُوْحٍ فَكَذَّبُوْا عَبْدَنَا وَ قَالُوْا مَجْنُوْنٌ وَّ ازْدُجِرَ ﴿٩﴾ فَدَعَا رَبَّهٗٓ اَنِّيْ مَغْلُوْبٌ فَانْتَصِرْ ﴿١٠﴾ فَفَتَحْنَآ
اَبْوَابَ السَّمَآءِ بِمَآءٍ مُّنْهَمِرٍ ﴿١١﴾ وَّ فَجَّرْنَا الْاَرْضَ عُيُوْنًا فَالْتَقَى الْمَآءُ عَلٰٓى اَمْرٍ قَدْ قُدِرَ ﴿١٢﴾ وَ حَمَلْنٰهُ عَلٰى ذَاتِ اَلْوَاحٍ وَّ
دُسُرٍ ﴿١٣﴾ تَجْرِيْ بِاَعْيُنِنَا ۚ جَزَآءً لِّمَنْ كَانَ كُفِرَ ﴿١٤﴾ وَلَقَدْ تَّرَكْنٰهَآ اٰيَةً فَهَلْ مِنْ مُّدَّكِرٍ ﴿١٥﴾ فَكَيْفَ كَانَ عَذَابِيْ وَ نُذُرِ ﴿١٦﴾
وَلَقَدْ يَسَّرْنَا الْقُرْاٰنَ لِلذِّكْرِ فَهَلْ مِنْ مُّدَّكِرٍ ﴿١٧﴾

Before them, the folks of Noah also denied. They rejected Our servant and said that he was a madman, and he was badly scolded. So, he implored before his Lord: "I am vanquished; so, You take revenge from them." So, We opened the gates of heaven with water pouring forth, and caused the earth to burst with gushing springs. The waters met at the point decreed and We carried him on that which was made of planks and nails, which sailed under Our protection: this We did as a recompense for him who had been slighted. And We made this anecdote an exemplary story [for those who may seek a lesson]. So, is there anyone who would take heed! See how true was My punishment and My warning? And We have made the Qur'ān very appropriate for reminding. So, is there any who shall take heed?!! (9-17)

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Explanation

كَذَّبَتْ قَبْلَهُمْ قَوْمُ نُوحٍ فَكَذَّبُوْا عَبْدَنَا وَ قَالُوْا مَجْنُوْنٌ وَّ ازْدُجِرَ ۝[9]

I have said earlier that this and the subsequent verses mention in detail the history of some prophetic nations briefly referred to before. Since the sequence adopted is chronological, the anecdote of Noah (sws) is mentioned first. It is said that before the Quraysh, the folks of Noah (sws) had also denied the warnings of God's messenger. This is in fact an assurance sounded to the Prophet Muḥammad (sws) that he is not the first person to be rejected by his people. The history of these rejecters is very old. Before them, the people of Noah (sws) had also rejected their prophet, as had other nations whose details are forthcoming. In other words, this is a well-known story of history which was encountered by previous messengers. The Prophet Muḥammad (sws) will also face it and the very fate met by the previous nations for their rejection will be met by his nation if they follow in their footsteps.

The letter ف in فَكَذَّبُوْا عَبْدَنَا وَ قَالُوْا مَجْنُوْنٌ وَّ ازْدُجِرَ is for explication. After briefly referring to the incident, with these words begin the details: the people of Noah (sws) denied God's servant; they called him a madman and a crazy person and severely snubbed him.

The affection of God for Noah (sws) reflected in the word عَبْدَنَا is self-evident. When the messengers of God warned people of the punishment both in this world and in the next and warned them very thoroughly and diligently day in and day out, it weighed heavily upon these people who had become slaves to the pleasures of this life and who were inebriated with their worldly status and achievements. They could not understand the reason and the source from which this punishment would come. If punishment was destined for them, why were they blessed with affluence and honour in this world? This affluence and honour bore evidence that God held them in high esteem, and if ever there was another world, there too they would hold this high position. By being led into this misconception, they became so annoyed with the constant and persistent warnings of the messenger of God that they started calling him a madman and a crazy person; they would say that this person had been overcome with the despair of punishment and of the Hereafter and that at every instant he saw this punishment hovering near. In this manner, they would not only release their anger, they would also try to assure the masses that they should not be influenced by the warnings of the messenger for he was not a messenger in the first place; he was a crazy person who constantly spoke of punishment.

The word وَازْدُجِرَ refers to the threats the people of Noah (sws) gave him about stoning him to death. Thus, for example, the words in Sūrah al-Shu'arā are: قَالُوْا لَئِنْ لَّمْ تَنْتَهِ يٰنُوْحُ لَتَكُوْنَنَّ مِنَ الْمَرْجُوْمِيْنَ. (١١٦:٢٦) (They threatened: "'Noah! If you do not desist from your ways, you shall end among those who have been stoned," (26:116)).

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9. Before them, the folks of Noah also denied. They rejected Our servant and said that he was a madman, and he was badly scolded.

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فَدَعَا رَبَّهٗۤ اَنِّیْ مَغْلُوْبٌ فَانْتَصِرْ ﴿۱۰﴾[10]

When the animosity of his people reached the extent that they threatened to stone him to death, he cried out and implored to God that he had done whatever was in his power to convince them but was unable to do so; he no longer had the power to continue, and hence God should then deal with these arrogant people in His own way.

The word اِنْتِصَارٌ means "to defend" and "to take revenge." Noah (sws) requested God to help him take revenge from them for their arrogance. The complete details of Noah's prayer are mentioned in Sūrah Nūḥ ahead.

فَفَتَحْنَاۤ اَبْوَابَ السَّمَآءِ بِمَآءٍ مُّنْهَمِرٍ ﴿۱۱﴾ وَّفَجَّرْنَا الْاَرْضَ عُیُوْنًا فَالْتَقَی الْمَآءُ عَلٰۤی اَمْرٍ قَدْ قُدِرَ ﴿۱۲﴾[11]

Mentioned in these verses are the details of the cyclonic storm that was encountered by Noah's people after his prayer. I have already mentioned its details in the exegesis of Sūrah al-Dhāriyāt. The Almighty opened the gates of the sky with water pouring forth, and caused the earth to burst with gushing springs. Obviously, such a stormy rain in which all the gates of the heavens had been opened would turn the earth into seas, rivers and canals.

The words فَالْتَقَی الْمَآءُ عَلٰۤی اَمْرٍ قَدْ قُدِرَ refer to the fact that the point up to which the Almighty had fixed for the water to rise was the very point the water from the sky and the earth touched each other and engulfed Noah's people in a manner that no one was able to escape from its grasp.

وَ حَمَلْنٰهُ عَلٰی ذَاتِ اَلْوَاحٍ وَّ دُسُرٍ ﴿۱۳﴾[12]

The words ذَاتِ اَلْوَاحٍ وَّ دُسُرٍ obviously refer to the Noah's ark which he built as per the special directive of the Almighty. Mentioning it here with its components, in my opinion, is to express God's power, wisdom, affection, mercy and majesty. The implication is that the Almighty saved those He wanted to by logs fixed together with nails from the storm which routed the whole nation and from which not a single soul survived. In other words, the real thing is God's mercy and affection. If they are with a person, then a few logs can save them from Noah's deluge, and if they desert a person, the greatest of war ships are flattened in the blink of any eye, and the strongest of dams are blown away like straws by the power of the deluge.

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10. So, he implored before his Lord: "I am vanquished; so, You take revenge from them."

11. So, We opened the gates of heaven with water pouring forth, and caused the earth to burst with gushing springs. The waters met at the point decreed.

12. And We carried him on that which was made of planks and nails.

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تَجْرِیْ بِاَعْیُنِنَا ۚ جَزَآءً لِّمَنْ كَانَ كُفِرَ ﴿۱۴﴾[13]

Since this ark was under the special protection and safe-keeping of God, it kept on advancing without any fear and tidal waves could not harm it in any way. It may be kept in mind that it was not Noah (sws) alone who had a boat; others too had their boats; however, these boats could not be of any benefit to them because they did not have God's protection.

The words جَزَآءً لِّمَنْ كَانَ كُفِرَ refer to the fact that the Almighty showed His majesty in order to help His servant who had been slighted and not duly honoured, so much so that he was compelled to cry out: اَنِّیْ مَغْلُوْبٌ فَانْتَصِرْ (I am vanquished; help me)

وَلَقَدْ تَّرَكْنٰهَاۤ اٰیَةً فَهَلْ مِنْ مُّدَّكِرٍ ﴿۱۵﴾[14]

The antecedent of the pronoun in تَّرَكْنٰهَاۤ can be the land referred to earlier in verse twelve by the words وَ فَجَّرْنَا الْاَرْضَ عُیُوْنًا and also the anecdote of Noah's folks whose details are mentioned in the Torah and which has been widely transmitted and known in every era.

The use of pronouns in this manner is very common in Arabic. I have cited several examples of such usage in previous volumes of this exegesis, and some more will be found in the later ones. Some people regard the antecedent of this pronoun to be the remains of Noah's Ark which were sighted by some people of later generations at a certain part of Mount Jūdī. However, I do not give importance to this opinion. Details are forthcoming in the exegesis of Sūrah al-Ḥāqqah.

The words فَهَلْ مِنْ مُّدَّكِرٍ imply that as far as signs and warning lessons are concerned, there are several on this earth and in history as well; however, if there is any dearth of anything, it is of hearts with the ability to pay heed to such signs.

فَكَیْفَ كَانَ عَذَابِیْ وَ نُذُرِ ﴿۱۶﴾[15]

The word نُذُرِ is actually نُذُرِی and the ی has been severed from it owing to the rhyme and the *kasrah* present as its remnant. The word نُذُرِ is a noun from the verbal noun اِنْذَار and it means "warnings" and "admonition." In other words, if a person has ears to pay heed and a heart to learn a lesson, he can see in this anecdote how profound is God's punishment and how accurately His threats materialize.

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13. Which sailed under Our protection: this We did as a recompense for him who had been slighted.

14. And We made this anecdote an exemplary story [for those who may seek a lesson]. So, is there anyone who would take heed!

15. See how true was My punishment and My warning?

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وَلَقَدْ يَسَّرْنَا الْقُرْاٰنَ لِلذِّكْرِ فَهَلْ مِنْ مُّدَّكِرٍ ﴿۱۷﴾[16]

This verse will be repeated after the end of every Prophetic anecdote. It should be fully understood so that its explanation is not required at every instance.

People have generally interpreted this verse to mean that the Almighty has made the Qur'ān a very easy book as far as memorizing it and seeking counsel from it is concerned. Though this inference in itself is correct that the Qur'ān is easy to memorize and to seek counsel from, yet this verse has a much wider connotation.

In the Arabic language, the word تَيْسِيْر means "to set right something through nails, to make something appropriate for a specific objective and to embellish it with all the required means and needs." The expression يَسَّرَ الفَرَسَ لِلرُّكُوبِ would mean that after been trained and fed, a horse was fully equipped with a saddle, a bridle and a stirrup and made ready for riding. From this usage, the word also came to be used to make a person ready for a campaign and equipped with all appropriate means and needs so that he is fully prepared for it. A poet, Muḍarris ibn Rub'ī, belonging to the age of ignorance says:[17]

ونعين فاعلنا على ما نابه
حتى نيسرہ لفعل السيد

Wa nu 'inu fā 'alnā 'alā mā nābahū
Hatta# nuyassirahū li fi 'il al-sayyid

(And when our leader has to undertake a campaign, we help him and make it easy and suitable for him to discharge the responsibilities imposed on leaders.)

The word ذِكْرٌ is also used in a wider connotation. The meanings of educating and instructing the readers as well as reminding, informing, warning, counselling, teaching a lesson and conclusively communicating the truth to them – all are implied. It is used in all these connotations in the Qur'ān. It needs to be appreciated that the Qur'ān does not impose something external on us; on the contrary, it revives and highlights the treasures of knowledge and cognizance the Almighty has innately blessed us with and to which we do not pay heed.

After understanding the true meaning of both these words, consider now the placement and context of this verse as well as its meaning. Earlier in the *sūrah*, it was said that the punishment which the Prophet (sws) was warning them of was inevitable.

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16. And We have made the Qur'ān very appropriate for reminding. So is there any who shall take heed?!!

17. Abū Tammām Ḥabīb ibn Aws al-Ṭā'i, *Dīwān al-ḥamāsah*, vol. 2 (Beirut: Dār al-qalam, n.d.), 41.

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The world within man and the one surrounding him bear witness to it. Similarly, the anecdotes of the Prophetic nations also bear evidence to it; however, they are adamant that they will believe only when they see a sign of this punishment even though the Almighty has revealed to them the Qur'ān to educate and to remind them. This Qur'ān is fully equipped to fulfil this purpose. So why are they not benefiting from this great favour and are eager instead to receive the lash of this punishment?

Some Important Aspects of Qur'ānic *Taysīr*

I have already discussed in detail the various aspects of Qur'ānic *taysīr* in my book *Mabādī Tadabbur-i Qur'ān*.[18] Here it is not possible to repeat them. However, I will allude to some of its important aspects viz a viz the verse. The purpose is to dispel the misconception of people who adduce from it that the Qur'ān is an easy and bland book which has only been revealed for memorization and reading, and that it does not require any reflection or deliberation to understand it. In their opinion, every person who even has a vague and rudimentary knowledge of Arabic can fluently understand the Qur'ān. Since this misconception can hinder a person's access to the Qur'ān, it is necessary to briefly state those aspects of Qur'ānic *taysīr* which are alluded to by God Himself.

– The most conspicuous aspect of Qur'ānic *taysīr* to which the Qur'ān itself has alluded is that it was revealed in lucid (*mubīn*) Arabic. It was set forth in the eloquent and articulate pure language of the Quraysh which is neither garbled nor muddled so that the people of Arabia could easily understand it and they were not left with an excuse to deny the truth from God.

– The second aspect is that the Almighty revealed the Qur'ān piecemeal so that the Prophet (sws) could gradually teach it and read it out to his people who in turn were able to gradually hear and understand it and fully digest its teachings. At one instance, the Qur'ān says: وَ قُرْاٰنًا فَرَقْنٰهُ لِتَقْرَاَهٗ عَلَى النَّاسِ عَلٰى مُكْثٍ وَّ نَزَّلْنٰهُ تَنْزِيْلًا (۱۰۶:۱۷) (and We have revealed the Qur'ān in parts so that you can gradually recite it out to people and We have elaborately and painstakingly revealed it [thus] (17:106)). Had the Qur'ān been revealed in one instalment as was the demand of the disbelievers, it would have been against Qur'ānic *taysīr.*

– The third aspect is that all the basic teachings of the Qur'ān were initially revealed in concise and succint verses and sentences and in the form of short yet comprehensive and terse *sūrahs* so that it could be easy for people to memorize and understand them, practice what they said and convey them to others. It was only when the people were fully accustomed to the Qur'ān that the Almighty explained these concise and pithy sentences. At one place, it is said: كِتٰبٌ اُحْكِمَتْ اٰيٰتُهٗ ثُمَّ فُصِّلَتْ مِنْ لَّدُنْ حَكِيْمٍ خَبِيْرٍ

18. Amin Aḥsan Iṣlāḥi, *Mabādī Tadabbur-i Qur'ān* (Lahore: Faran Foundation, 1988), 73-182

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(۱۱:۱) (this is a Book, of which the verses were first concise and then they were explained from Him Who is wise and all-knowing, (11:1)).

– The fourth aspect is that every teaching and precept of the Qur'ān is mentioned in various styles and with different aspects in different contexts and in numerous backgrounds so that if at one place a reader is not fully able to understand something, he can grasp it fully at another place, and if at one place an argument is not fully appreciated, he can comprehend it in the background of a different context. The Qur'ān has called this variety and diversity in its expression as *taṣrīf*: كَذٰلِكَ نُصَرِّفُ الْاٰيٰتِ. (۵۸:۷) (thus do We diversify Our revelations, (7:58)).

– The fifth aspect is that there exist in the Qur'ān seven groups consisting of Makkan and Madīnan *sūrahs*. Together these seven groups constitute the majestic Qur'ān. Each group has a content similar to others and also distinct. Each *sūrah* has a counterpart and both members of a pair complement one another in the discussion of a topic. While explaining verses: اَللّٰهُ نَزَّلَ اَحْسَنَ الْحَدِيْثِ كِتٰبًا مُّتَشَابِهًا مَّثَانِيَ. (۲۳:۳۹) (God has revealed the best of discourses whose verses resemble one another and whose *sūrahs* occur in pairs, (39:23)) and وَلَقَدْ اٰتَيْنٰكَ سَبْعًا مِّنَ الْمَثَانِيْ وَالْقُرْاٰنَ الْعَظِيْمَ (۸۷ :۱۵) (And [O Prophet!] We have bestowed upon you seven *mathānī*[19] which is this great Qur'ān, (15:87)) I have alluded to these aspects. It is obvious that this elaborate arrangement of the Qur'ān has been done by the Almighty to facilitate Qur'ānic *taysīr*.

Section III: Verses (18-42)

For the very purpose the anecdote of Noah (sws) and his people is recounted earlier, the anecdotes of the 'Ād, Thamūd, the people of Lot (sws) and the followers of the Pharaoh are related in the forthcoming verses. Each of these anecdotes ends on the repetitive verse with which the anecdote of Noah (sws) ended.

Readers may now proceed to read the coming verses.

Text and Translation

كَذَّبَتْ عَادٌ فَكَيْفَ كَانَ عَذَابِيْ وَنُذُرِ ﴿۱۸﴾ اِنَّآ اَرْسَلْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ رِيْحًا صَرْصَرًا فِيْ يَوْمِ نَحْسٍ مُّسْتَمِرٍّ ﴿۱۹﴾ تَنْزِعُ النَّاسَ
كَاَنَّهُمْ اَعْجَازُ نَخْلٍ مُّنْقَعِرٍ ﴿۲۰﴾ فَكَيْفَ كَانَ عَذَابِيْ وَنُذُرِ ﴿۲۱﴾ وَلَقَدْ يَسَّرْنَا الْقُرْاٰنَ لِلذِّكْرِ فَهَلْ مِنْ مُّدَّكِرٍ ﴿۲۲﴾ كَذَّبَتْ
ثَمُوْدُ بِالنُّذُرِ ﴿۲۳﴾ فَقَالُوْٓا اَبَشَرًا مِّنَّا وَاحِدًا نَّتَّبِعُهٗٓ اِنَّآ اِذًا لَّفِيْ ضَلٰلٍ وَّ سُعُرٍ ﴿۲۴﴾ ءَاُلْقِيَ الذِّكْرُ عَلَيْهِ مِنْۢ بَيْنِنَا بَلْ هُوَ
كَذَّابٌ اَشِرٌ ﴿۲۵﴾ سَيَعْلَمُوْنَ غَدًا مَّنِ الْكَذَّابُ الْاَشِرُ ﴿۲۶﴾ اِنَّا مُرْسِلُوا النَّاقَةِ فِتْنَةً لَّهُمْ فَارْتَقِبْهُمْ وَ اصْطَبِرْ ﴿۲۷﴾ وَ
نَبِّئْهُمْ اَنَّ الْمَآءَ قِسْمَةٌۢ بَيْنَهُمْ كُلُّ شِرْبٍ مُّحْتَضَرٌ ﴿۲۸﴾ فَنَادَوْا صَاحِبَهُمْ فَتَعَاطٰى فَعَقَرَ ﴿۲۹﴾ فَكَيْفَ كَانَ عَذَابِيْ وَنُذُرِ

19. *Mathānī* (مثانی) is the plural of *mathnā* (مثنی) and it means something which occurs in pairs.

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﴿٣٠﴾ اِنَّآ اَرۡسَلۡنَا عَلَيۡهِمۡ صَيۡحَةً وَّاحِدَةً فَكَانُوۡا كَهَشِيۡمِ الۡمُحۡتَظِرِ ﴿٣١﴾ وَلَقَدۡ يَسَّرۡنَا الۡقُرۡاٰنَ لِلذِّكۡرِ فَهَلۡ مِنۡ مُّدَّكِرٍ ﴿٣٢﴾
كَذَّبَتۡ قَوۡمُ لُوۡطٍۭ بِالنُّذُرِ ﴿٣٣﴾ اِنَّآ اَرۡسَلۡنَا عَلَيۡهِمۡ حَاصِبًا اِلَّآ اٰلَ لُوۡطٍ ؕ نَجَّيۡنٰهُمۡ بِسَحَرٍ ﴿٣٤﴾ نِّعۡمَةً مِّنۡ عِنۡدِنَا ؕ كَذٰلِكَ
نَجۡزِىۡ مَنۡ شَكَرَ ﴿٣٥﴾ وَلَقَدۡ اَنۡذَرَهُمۡ بَطۡشَتَنَا فَتَمَارَوۡا بِالنُّذُرِ ﴿٣٦﴾ وَلَقَدۡ رَاوَدُوۡهُ عَنۡ ضَيۡفِهٖ فَطَمَسۡنَآ اَعۡيُنَهُمۡ فَذُوۡقُوۡا عَذَابِىۡ
وَنُذُرِ ﴿٣٧﴾ وَلَقَدۡ صَبَّحَهُمۡ بُكۡرَةً عَذَابٌ مُّسۡتَقِرٌّ ﴿٣٨﴾ فَذُوۡقُوۡا عَذَابِىۡ وَنُذُرِ ﴿٣٩﴾ وَلَقَدۡ يَسَّرۡنَا الۡقُرۡاٰنَ لِلذِّكۡرِ فَهَلۡ مِنۡ
مُّدَّكِرٍ ﴿٤٠﴾ وَلَقَدۡ جَآءَ اٰلَ فِرۡعَوۡنَ النُّذُرُ ﴿٤١﴾ كَذَّبُوۡا بِاٰيٰتِنَا كُلِّهَا فَاَخَذۡنٰهُمۡ اَخۡذَ عَزِيۡزٍ مُّقۡتَدِرٍ ﴿٤٢﴾

The 'Ād also rejected. Then observe how My punishment and My threats materialized. We let loose on them a stormy wind at a perpetual time of bad omen which plucked out people as if they were uprooted trunks of palm-trees. So, see how My punishment and My threats materialized. And We have made the Qur'ān very appropriate for reminding. So, is there anyone who shall take heed?!! (18-22)

The Thamūd also rejected the warning. They said: "Are we to follow a person who belongs to us? If we do so, we shall be clearly straying and end up in Hell. Did he alone among us receive this Reminder? In fact, he is indeed a liar, a boaster. Tomorrow they shall know who the liar and the boaster is. We will be sending a she-camel as a test for them. So, keep a watch on them and have patience, and inform them that the water is to be shared between them. Everyone shall come on his turn. Then they cried out to their leader; so, he came forward and hamstrung the she-camel. Then observe how My punishment and My threats materialized. We sent upon them a single shout and they became like the trampled hedge of a sheep-fold builder. And We have made the Qur'ān very appropriate for reminding. So, is there anyone who shall take heed?!! (23-32)

The people of Lot also rejected the warnings. So, We unleashed on them a stone-charged whirlwind; only the followers of Lot survived, whom, as a special favour, We bailed out at dawn. Thus do We reward those who are grateful. And, indeed, he informed them of Our grasp, but they only made foolish objections on the warnings. And they tempted him about his guests; so, We blinded their eyes; so, taste My wrath and My warning. And, indeed, at daybreak, an abiding punishment seized them. So taste My punishment and My warning. And We have made the Qur'ān very appropriate for reminding. So, is there anyone who shall take heed?!! (33-40)

And, indeed, to the Pharaoh's people also came the warnings. But they rejected all Our signs. So, We grasped them with the grasp of One Mighty, Powerful. (41-42)

Explanation

كَذَّبَتۡ عَادٌ فَكَيۡفَ كَانَ عَذَابِىۡ وَنُذُرِ ﴿٣٨﴾[20]

The word بِالنُّذُرِ is suppressed after كَذَّبَتۡ ثَمُوۡدُ because of clear contextual indication later. Thus it is said: كَذَّبَتۡ ثَمُوۡدُ بِالنُّذُرِ ﴿٢٣﴾. The word نُذُر is the plural of نَذِيۡر (warner) and

20. The 'Ād also rejected. Then observe how My punishment and My threats materialized.

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also a verbal noun from إِنْذَار (warning). If the first meaning is adopted, it would refer to the messengers who were warners or signs who served as reminders and warnings which were meant to awaken people. If the second meaning is adopted, it would refer to warnings, threats, reminders and intimidation.

إِنَّآ أَرْسَلْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ رِيحًا صَرْصَرًا فِى يَوْمِ نَحْسٍ مُّسْتَمِرٍّ ﴿١٩﴾[21]

This is an explanation of the punishment which the Almighty unleashed on the people of 'Ād. He sent upon them a stormy wind from the North. صَرْصَر is a tempestuous winter wind which is ominous and portentous in nature. This would be a period of drought in Arabia. For these days, they would call it the "ominous period" or the "ill-fated period." The words يَوْمِ نَحْسٍ of the verse do not refer to a particular ill-fated day; they refer to a particular time period. The word يَوْمٌ is commonly used thus. Thus, at another place, the words used are: أَيَّامِ نَحِسَاتٍ and at other places it is specified that this stormy wind blew on them for seven nights and eight days.

The word مُسْتَمِرٍّ shows that this wind was not a temporary gust which people could have tolerated. It blew upon them as a scourge of God for seven to eight days.

تَنزِعُ النَّاسَ ۙ كَأَنَّهُمْ أَعْجَازُ نَخْلٍ مُّنقَعِرٍ ﴿٢٠﴾[22]

Such was the force of this wind that it plucked out people as if they were uprooted trunks of palm-trees. In Sūrah al-Ḥāqqah, the word خَاوِيَةٌ (hollow) is used instead of مُّنقَعِرٍ. It is stated at other places in the Qur'ān that when the wind started to blow each person was pinned to the ground wherever he was and since the force of the wind continued to increase, no one was able to get up. In this state, every one perished and their dead bodies were hurled by the wind from one place to another as if they were hollow trunks of palm-trees.

فَكَيْفَ كَانَ عَذَابِى وَنُذُرِ ﴿٢١﴾ وَلَقَدْ يَسَّرْنَا الْقُرْءَانَ لِلذِّكْرِ فَهَلْ مِن مُّدَّكِرٍ ﴿٢٢﴾[23]

These verses have already been explained at the end of Noah's anecdote cited earlier.

كَذَّبَتْ ثَمُودُ بِالنُّذُرِ ﴿٢٣﴾ فَقَالُوٓا أَبَشَرًا مِّنَّا وَٰحِدًا نَّتَّبِعُهُۥٓ ۙ إِنَّآ إِذًا لَّفِى ضَلَٰلٍ وَسُعُرٍ ﴿٢٤﴾[24]

In a similar manner, the people of Thamūd too rejected the warnings of their

21. We let loose on them a stormy wind at a perpetual time of bad omen.

22. Which plucked out people as if they were uprooted trunks of palm-trees.

23. So, see how My punishment and My threats materialized. And We have made the Qur'ān very appropriate for reminding. So, is there anyone who shall take heed?!!

24. The Thamūd also rejected the warning. They said: "Are we to follow a person who belongs to us? If we do so, we shall be clearly straying and end up in Hell.

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messenger. They reckoned that if they regarded a human being from among them to be a messenger and then follow him, this would mean that they had been led astray and ruined. Generally, people have translated the word سُعُرٍ as "madness;" however, the manner in which this word is used here negates this usage. In my opinion, it is a plural and means "fire." Verse 47 of this *sūrah* reads: اِنَّ الۡمُجۡرِمِيۡنَ فِىۡ ضَلٰلٍ وَّسُعُرٍ ﴿۴۷﴾ (indeed, the wrongdoers are in error and shall be flung into Hell). Obviously, this very warning must have been issued by Ṣāliḥ (rta) to his people as well. These people must have reacted by saying the same words to him: he says that if we do not accept his calls, we will be in error and cast into Hell; the fact of the matter is that if we accept his calls, we will then be in error and will be flung into Hell. Idioms such as "Be doomed" or "Go to Hell" are common in the English language as well. The relation between error and Hell is causative; however, no such relationship is comprehensible between error and madness.

ءَاُلۡقِىَ الذِّكۡرُ عَلَيۡهِ مِنۡۢ بَيۡنِنَا بَلۡ هُوَ كَذَّابٌ اَشِرٌ ﴿۲۵﴾[25]

The Thamūd were of the opinion that in the first place it was very strange that God make a human being a messenger and even stranger was the fact that of all the people God select Ṣāliḥ for this great task; there was nothing special about him that he be made the custodian of God's guidance; why should people who had been entrusted with the leadership of their nation for generations be ignored in this matter; thus it was absolutely impossible that this person be truthful in his claim; he was an absolute liar and a bragger; by claiming to be a messenger of God, he wanted to command them and prove his superiority to them.

سَيَعۡلَمُوۡنَ غَدًا مَّنِ الۡكَذَّابُ الۡاَشِرُ ﴿۲۶﴾[26]

In this verse, the Almighty has responded to their reaction forthwith: let them utter whatever nonsense they want to. The time of the judgement is near. The punishment of God is about to come. At that time, they will see who the liar and the bragger is.

اِنَّا مُرۡسِلُوا النَّاقَةِ فِتۡنَةً لَّهُمۡ فَارۡتَقِبۡهُمۡ وَاصۡطَبِرۡ ﴿۲۷﴾[27]

This is the prelude to the punishment alluded to in the previous verse: The Almighty would soon depute a special she-camel as a trial for them; so Ṣāliḥ (sws) should keep an eye on them and wait patiently for what happens i.e. how they deal with the she-camel and what fate they will as a result meet. The manner in which this she-camel

25. Did he alone among us receive this Reminder? In fact, he is indeed a liar, a boaster.
26. Tomorrow they shall know who the liar and the boaster is.
27. We will be sending a she-camel as a test for them. So, keep a watch on them and have patience,

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became a trial for them is mentioned in the subsequent verses.

وَنَبِّئْهُمْ اَنَّ الْمَآءَ قِسْمَةٌۢ بَيْنَهُمْ ۚ كُلُّ شِرْبٍ مُّحْتَضَرٌ ﴿٢٨﴾[28]

After selecting a she-camel for the task, the Almighty asked Ṣāliḥ (sws) to inform his people that turns had been fixed to drink water from the fountain; no one would have the right to stop the she-camel from drinking when her turn came; if she was harmed in any way, then this would be a prelude to God's punishment. They were made to undergo this trial so that the evil in them was exposed and the extent of their rebelliousness was known to all. Obviously, after this warning that this she-camel was a sign of God's wrath only those people could have had the audacity to harm it who themselves were audacious enough to even harm their messenger. It is this extent of a nation's rebelliousness and arrogance after which it becomes worthy of divine punishment. After this, nothing remains to conclusively prove the truth to them.

فَنَادَوْا صَاحِبَهُمْ فَتَعَاطٰى فَعَقَرَ ﴿٢٩﴾[29]

How could the Thamūd abide by this restriction? They thought that this was just a false threat made by the prophet Ṣāliḥ (sws). Thus they called upon their leader. He came forward and hamstrung the she-camel. The word تَعَاطٰى means "to stand on one's toes to take the initiative in doing something." In other words, as per his own view, he showed great valour and took a very courageous step for his people; however, this daring step of his doomed them.

The word عَقَرَ means "to hamstring a camel." Once this is done, it becomes impossible for the animal to survive.

فَكَيْفَ كَانَ عَذَابِيْ وَنُذُرِ ﴿٣٠﴾[30]

This verse has already been explained above. After this incident, people were faced with God's promised doom. It is evident from other places of the Qur'ān that after this they were given a further respite of three days: if they wanted, they could repent during that period; however, they did not benefit from this reprieve.

اِنَّآ اَرْسَلْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ صَيْحَةً وَّاحِدَةً فَكَانُوْا كَهَشِيْمِ الْمُحْتَظِرِ ﴿٣١﴾[31]

The verse refers to the punishment which was faced by the Thamūd. The word صَيْحَة

28. And inform them that the water is to be shared between them. Everyone shall come on his turn.

29. Then they cried out to their leader; so, he came forward and hamstrung the she-camel.

30. Then observe how My punishment and My threats materialized.

31. We sent upon them a single shout and they became like the trampled hedge of a sheep-fold builder.

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means "a shout." At another place, the word used is صَاعِقَةٌ (thunder). My mentor, Imām Ḥamīd al-Dīn Farāhī, in his *tafsīr* of Sūrah al-Dhāriyāt has discussed the nature of this punishment in detail in the light of the Qur'ān. He has summarized this discussion at the end in the following words:[32]

> It is evident from these details that the Almighty unleashed on them the punishment of winter clouds, stormy wind and horrific thunder. However, their actual destruction took place through the wind. Thus, if one employs the method of adducing the consequence from the effect it becomes evident that the Almighty sent to them striped wintry clouds which contained horrific thunder and a deafening shout.

It should be kept in mind that a natural consequence of such thunder and lightning is a hail storm which, if it intensifies, takes the form of the terrible punishment of stone-pelting and quashes everything to bits and pieces.

The word مُحْتَظِرِ means the person who constructs a sheep-fold. Shepherds generally construct such folds in their fields with hay and brambles to protect their herds, which are kept there by night. Such a fold becomes squashed to bits and pieces after rain, windstorm and trampling of the animals The word هَشِيمِ refers to such crushed bits and pieces. This, in other words, is a parable of their destruction: they were crushed to pieces by rain, thunder, wind and hail storms in the same manner as the trampled hedged of sheep-fold builder. Onlookers do think that there must have been some people living here; however, only their trampled ruins now remain.

وَلَقَدْ يَسَّرْنَا الْقُرْاٰنَ لِلذِّكْرِ فَهَلْ مِنْ مُّدَّكِرٍ ﴿٣٢﴾[33]

This repetitive verse has already been explained earlier.

كَذَّبَتْ قَوْمُ لُوْطٍۭ بِالنُّذُرِ ﴿٣٣﴾ اِنَّآ اَرْسَلْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ حَاصِبًا اِلَّآ اٰلَ لُوْطٍ ؕ نَجَّيْنٰهُمْ بِسَحَرٍ ﴿٣٤﴾[34]

The verses say that the people of Lot (sws) also rejected the warnings, and once the truth had been conclusively communicated to them by the Almighty, a stone-charged storm was unleashed on them by Him. The nature of a حَاصِب has already been explained in the exegesis of Sūrah al-Dhāriyāt.

The words إِلَّا آلَ لُوطٍ show that only the آلَ of Lot (sws) was protected from this storm. The word آلَ has already been explained at a relevant place in this exegesis: the word

32. Farāhī, *Majmū'ah tafāsīr*, 134.

33. And We have made the Qur'ān very appropriate for reminding. So is there anyone who shall take heed?!!

34. The people of Lot also rejected the warnings. So, We unleashed on them a stone-charged whirlwind; only the followers of Lot survived, whom,

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does not merely include a person's real offspring; it also includes his symbolic offspring ie. his followers etc.

The words نَجَّيْنٰهُمْ بِسَحَرٍ depict that God sifted out Lot (sws) and his followers at dawn which was before the time the torment descended on his people. One of the succeeding verses has referred to the time of this torment by the words: وَلَقَدْ صَبَّحَهُمْ بُكْرَةً. This shows that the torment appeared in the morning while these people had already vacated their place before the advent of dawn. This protection obviously was afforded to them by the special grace of God.

نِّعْمَةً مِّنْ عِنْدِنَا ؕ كَذٰلِكَ نَجْزِیْ مَنْ شَكَرَ ﴿۳۵﴾[35]

Being saved from such a horrific torment is only possible because of God's blessing; no one else can do such a thing.

The words كَذٰلِكَ نَجْزِیْ مَنْ شَكَرَ not only express extra-ordinary praise for the trait of gratefulness found in Lot (sws), it is also an open proclamation of the fact that this favour of God is not specific to Lot (sws) alone; even today people who are grateful will be worthy of this special favour for vast is God's mercy.

وَلَقَدْ اَنْذَرَهُمْ بَطْشَتَنَا فَتَمَارَوْا بِالنُّذُرِ ﴿۳۶﴾[36]

The previous verse was of the nature of a parenthetical sentence. This verse mentions the reason which made them liable for this punishment: it was their obduracy and stubbornness which made them liable for it. The messenger of God had fully informed them from every aspect that if they did not mend their ways, they would be seized by God and no one could help them against God; however, they tried to counter every admonition with baseless arguments.

وَلَقَدْ رَاوَدُوْهُ عَنْ ضَيْفِهٖ فَطَمَسْنَآ اَعْيُنَهُمْ فَذُوْقُوْا عَذَابِیْ وَنُذُرِ ﴿۳۷﴾[37]

Expressed in this verse is the last of their audacities after which the punishment of God arrived. Not only did they pay no heed to the warnings of the messenger on their licentious behaviour, they became more and more persistent in it as time passed. The stage came that when the angels appeared to Lot (sws) in the form of two handsome men, they charged towards his house and tried to convince him to hand over his guests to them so that they could quench their desire for them.

People who become blind and deaf in this manner are turned blind and deaf as per

35. As a special favour, We bailed out at dawn. Thus do We reward those who are grateful.

36. And, indeed, he informed them of Our grasp, but they only made foolish objections on the warnings.

37. And they tempted him about his guests; so, We blinded their eyes; so taste My wrath and My warning.

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the established practice of God. At this stage, they are neither able to pay heed to any counsel nor to the greatest of signs. The only thing which then remains is God's scourge. Consequently, these people too were consigned to it.

It does not necessarily spring from the words فَطَمَسْنَآ اَعْيُنَهُمْ that their eyes were quashed; it can also signify their total deprivation from drawing a lesson. At many places, this style has been adopted by the Qur'ān to convey this meaning. For example, in Sūrah Muḥammad, the words are:

اُولٰٓئِكَ الَّذِيْنَ لَعَنَهُمُ اللّٰهُ فَاَصَمَّهُمْ وَاَعْمٰٓى اَبْصَارَهُمْ. (٤٧: ٢٣)

It is these people whom God has accursed; thus leaving them deaf and sightless. (47:23)

In the light of the above verse, the meaning of فَطَمَسْنَآ اَعْيُنَهُمْ would be that when they were overcome by their desires and reached this ultimate state, the Almighty afflicted them with a curse as result of which they were deprived of seeking any lesson for their future. The real utility of a person's eyes is not because of the sockets in which they are placed; their real purpose is to look beyond and discern things. A person who is deprived of this ability is a person accursed by God and he who has been cursed by God is permanently a target of His wrath.

Incidentally, it is also known that when these miscreants tried to lure Lot (sws) with regard to his guests, the latter in order to assure him had disclosed to him the secret that they were angels and not human beings and that these devils would never be able to even come near them. Right after this disclosure, they bade Lot (sws) leave the place. Once he had departed, it can be adduced that they assumed their actual form as angels and in this form human eyes were unable to see them.

وَلَقَدْ صَبَّحَهُمْ بُكْرَةً عَذَابٌ مُّسْتَقِرٌّ ﴿٣٨﴾[38]

In the morning, the torment of a stone-hurling wind descended upon them. It was generally at this time that caravans would be attacked and looted in Arabia. For this reason, the word صَبَّحَ was used in the meaning of loot and plunder. It has been indicated earlier that Lot (sws) with his followers had left the place early at dawn, and here it is said that the punishment came when morning had set in. It can thus be deduced that the punishment alighted after Lot (sws) was afforded enough time to vacate the area.

The expression عَذَابٌ مُّسْتَقِرٌّ means a lasting punishment. One form of punishment is that which comes merely for warning and which is meted out both to the believers and the disbelievers without any distinction. While the former learn a lesson from it, the

38. And, indeed, at daybreak, an abiding punishment seized them.

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latter only increase in their callousness from it. Another form of punishment is the one which is meted out to the immediate addressees of a messenger when they deny him. Each nation that was given such a punishment was given it in the form of an abiding torment. While the believers were sifted out from the area, those who had denied their messenger were destroyed at that place.

The word مُّسْتَقِرٌّ is meant to point to the fact that the nature of this punishment was not momentary like a gust of wind; it took permanent hold of the place it was sent to.

فَذُوْقُوْا عَذَابِيْ وَنُذُرِ ﴿٣٩﴾ وَلَقَدْ يَسَّرْنَا الْقُرْاٰنَ لِلذِّكْرِ فَهَلْ مِنْ مُّدَّكِرٍ ﴿٤٠﴾[39]

This is the repetitive verse which occurs after every prophetic anecdote. I have fully explained it above.

وَلَقَدْ جَآءَ اٰلَ فِرْعَوْنَ النُّذُرُ ﴿٤١﴾ كَذَّبُوْا بِاٰيٰتِنَا كُلِّهَا فَاَخَذْنٰهُمْ اَخْذَ عَزِيْزٍ مُّقْتَدِرٍ ﴿٤٢﴾[40]

Here, at the end, the fate of Pharaoh and his people has also been briefly alluded to. The word آل does not merely mean his family; it refers to the whole nation. The word النُّذُرُ is in the plural here, and the words كَذَّبُوْا بِاٰيٰتِنَا كُلِّهَا have explained this aspect. The word النُّذُرُ refers to all the signs of warning which manifested themselves at the hands of Moses (sws) to warn the Egyptians of the wrath of God and which have been discussed in detail in the Torah. The Qur'ān has also referred to them and I have explained them elsewhere. Each of these signs was enough to open their eyes; however, so callous had the hearts of these people become that in spite of seeing these signs they remained blind to them.

The words اَخْذَ عَزِيْزٍ مُّقْتَدِرٍ refer to the fact that God seized them in a manner as someone who is profoundly powerful and potent seizes and from whose wrath no one can be shielded.

Section III: Verses (49-55)

Coming up are the closing verses of the *sūrah*. The leaders of the Quraysh are directly addressed and admonished and told to learn a lesson from the history of the Messengers and their nations recounted to them. They will meet the same fate as these nations met when they denied their respective messengers; they are not special so as not to meet this fate. Like them, they too shall be humiliated in this world and face even a worse fate in the world to come. At the end, a brief mention is made of the

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39. So, taste My punishment and My warning. And We have made the Qur'ān very appropriate for reminding. So, is there anyone who shall take heed?

40. And, indeed, to the Pharoah's people also came the warnings. But they rejected all Our signs; so, We grasped them with the grasp of One Mighty, Powerful.

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reward which those who remained fearful to God will receive. Readers may now proceed to study these verses.

Text and Translation

أَكُفَّارُكُمْ خَيْرٌ مِّنْ أُولَٰئِكُمْ أَمْ لَكُم بَرَاءَةٌ فِي الزُّبُرِ ﴿٤٣﴾ أَمْ يَقُولُونَ نَحْنُ جَمِيعٌ مُّنتَصِرٌ ﴿٤٤﴾ سَيُهْزَمُ الْجَمْعُ وَيُوَلُّونَ الدُّبُرَ ﴿٤٥﴾ بَلِ
السَّاعَةُ مَوْعِدُهُمْ وَالسَّاعَةُ أَدْهَىٰ وَأَمَرُّ ﴿٤٦﴾ إِنَّ الْمُجْرِمِينَ فِي ضَلَالٍ وَسُعُرٍ ﴿٤٧﴾ يَوْمَ يُسْحَبُونَ فِي النَّارِ عَلَىٰ وُجُوهِهِمْ ذُوقُوا
مَسَّ سَقَرَ ﴿٤٨﴾ إِنَّا كُلَّ شَيْءٍ خَلَقْنَاهُ بِقَدَرٍ ﴿٤٩﴾ وَمَا أَمْرُنَا إِلَّا وَاحِدَةٌ كَلَمْحٍ بِالْبَصَرِ ﴿٥٠﴾ وَلَقَدْ أَهْلَكْنَا أَشْيَاعَكُمْ فَهَلْ مِن مُّدَّكِرٍ ﴿٥١﴾ وَ
كُلُّ شَيْءٍ فَعَلُوهُ فِي الزُّبُرِ ﴿٥٢﴾ وَكُلُّ صَغِيرٍ وَكَبِيرٍ مُّسْتَطَرٌ ﴿٥٣﴾ إِنَّ الْمُتَّقِينَ فِي جَنَّاتٍ وَنَهَرٍ ﴿٥٤﴾ فِي مَقْعَدِ صِدْقٍ عِندَ مَلِيكٍ
مُّقْتَدِرٍ ﴿٥٥﴾

Are the disbelievers of your nation better than those of the other nations or is there an acquittal written for you in the heavenly scriptures? Do they claim: "We are a group who has the ability to fight back." They should remember that their group shall soon be routed and they will turn and flee. (43-45)

In fact, the actual time in which the promise made to them shall be fulfilled is the Day of Judgement, and the Day of Judgement will be most grievous and most bitter. (46)

Indeed, these wrongdoers are in error and shall end up in Hell. They should remember the Day when they shall be dragged face-downwards into the flames of Hell.[41] Taste ye now the sensation of Hell. (47-48)

We have created everything according to a measure. And Our directive will be fulfilled just once in the blink of an eye. And We destroyed nations like yourselves. So, is there anyone who will take warning from their fate?! (49-51)

And everything they have done is recorded in registers and every matter, small or great, is noted down. (52-53)

Indeed, those who fear God shall dwell in the bliss of gardens and rivers, a place of permanent honour, before a Mighty King. (54-55)

أَكُفَّارُكُمْ خَيْرٌ مِّنْ أُولَٰئِكُمْ أَمْ لَكُم بَرَاءَةٌ فِي الزُّبُرِ ﴿٤٣﴾[42]

The Qurayash – who are under discussion since the beginning of the *sūrah* – are directly addressed here. They are told that they have heard of the fate of nations who denied their respective messengers. So why would God adopt a different attitude towards them if they follow in the footsteps of those nations? Are their disbelievers

41. The author has overlooked part of the translation of this verse (into the flames of Hell), which I have inserted. (*Translator*)

42. Are the disbelievers of your nation better than those of the other nations or is there an acquittal written for you in the heavenly scriptures?

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better than the disbelievers of those nations or is there some acquittal written for them in divine scriptures so that they can do whatever they like without any accountability? It is a requisite of God's justice that He deal with each nation in the same manner, and this is actually what is written in the scriptures. So from where have they obtained the permission of general immunity?

This subject is discussed in Sūrah al-Qalam in the following words: اَمۡ لَكُمۡ كِتٰبٌ فِيۡهِ تَدۡرُسُوۡنَ.اِنَّ لَكُمۡ فِيۡهِ لَمَا تَخَيَّرُوۡنَ (٦٧: ٣٧-٣٨) (have you a scripture in which you read that you will have whatever you desire? (68: 37-38))

اَمۡ يَقُوۡلُوۡنَ نَحۡنُ جَمِيۡعٌ مُّنۡتَصِرٌ ﴿٤٤﴾ سَيُهۡزَمُ الۡجَمۡعُ وَ يُوَلُّوۡنَ الدُّبُرَ ﴿٤٥﴾[43]

The implication of this verse is that if they think that they are a strong group and no one can harm them, then this thought of theirs is baseless. No one can resist the punishment of God.

Just as people who are proud of their strength in this way ignore any threat or warning from their opponents, the same way, in fact even more so, they do not regard the warnings of messengers of God to be worthy of attention. They rely so much on their worldly resources that they are unable to understand how and from where divine punishment will descend on them. These verses warn them that if they vainly reckon that they can fully defend themselves on every front, they should remember that their strength can be of absolutely no use to them before the might and power of God; when it manifests itself, they shall be routed and will scamper backwards.

بَلِ السَّاعَةُ مَوۡعِدُهُمۡ وَالسَّاعَةُ اَدۡهٰى وَ اَمَرُّ ﴿٤٦﴾[44]

The implication of this verse is that although they will be routed and ravaged in this world, the warnings sounded to them will in reality manifest in the Hereafter. It will be a very severe and bitter day for them.

It should remain in consideration that the punishment mentioned in the previous verse is necessarily meted out in this world to those who intentionally deny their messengers. In the verse under discussion, the punishment referred to is the one which they will face on the Day of Judgement, which will be very critical for them.

I have explained the established practice of God at a number of places of this exegesis that the immediate addressees of a messenger who deny him are humbled in this world and in the Hereafter too they are humiliated. It is to this latter reality that this verse refers.

The word مَوۡعِد is an adverb of place or time here. It means the real place or time at

43. Do they claim: "We are a group who has the ability to fight back." They should remember that their group shall soon be routed and they will turn and flee.

44. In fact, the actual time in which the promise made to them shall be fulfilled is the Day of Judgement, and the Day of Judgement will be most grievous and most bitter.

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which these threats sounded to them will materialize.

The word أَدْهَى means that that Day will be so ruthless that people will not know what is going on around them. Each person will be worried stiff.

إِنَّ الْمُجْرِمِينَ فِي ضَلَالٍ وَسُعُرٍ ﴿٤٧﴾ [45]

Today these sinners conceitedly say that if they regarded a human being from among themselves to be a messenger of God and then followed him, they would end up in error and in Hell; however, on that day, they will see with their own eyes that those who denied the warnings of the messenger were in grave error and the result was that they ended up in Hell. The word سُعُر as I have referred to earlier does not mean madness; it refers to Hell. It is mentioned in the plural so that the various sections and abodes of Hell can be alluded to. In a similar manner, the word جَنَّاتٌ is used in the plural at many places in the Qur'ān.

يَوْمَ يُسْحَبُونَ فِي النَّارِ عَلَىٰ وُجُوهِهِمْ ذُوقُوا مَسَّ سَقَرَ ﴿٤٨﴾ [46]

Expressed here is a reminder of the humiliation which the sinners will face on that day. Today these people are denying out of great pride and arrogance; however, soon the day will come when they will be dragged face wards to the fire of Hell. This obviously is a form of extreme humiliation. This punishment will be given to them because out of arrogance and pride they denied an obvious reality.

The words ذُوقُوا مَسَّ سَقَرَ can be expressed through the tongue and can also be a reflection of their circumstances. I prefer the latter. The way they will be dragged face wards will clearly inform them why they are being treated in this manner.

إِنَّا كُلَّ شَيْءٍ خَلَقْنَاهُ بِقَدَرٍ ﴿٤٩﴾ [47]

The promised punishment and the Day of Judgement are certain to come. As far as the question of their exact time of arrival is concerned, the answer is that God has created everything with a special measure and set a definite time period for everything so that it achieves the purpose for which it was created. He deals with nations on a similar pattern as well. If a nation becomes rebellious, He does not seize it at once; He gives it enough respite in which it is able to enliven its abilities of good and evil so that the truth is conclusively communicated to it and it is left with no excuse to put forward on the Day of Judgement. The Quraysh will be dealt in a similar way too. He will give them the requisite respite which they should get as per His law so that if they want to mend their

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45. Indeed, these wrongdoers are in error and shall end up in Hell.

46. They should remember the Day when they shall be dragged face-downwards into the flames of Hell. Taste ye now the sensation of Hell.

47. We have created everything according to a measure.

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ways in the light of prophetic guidance they are afforded this opportunity; and if this is not to be the case, then enough time should elapse so that when they are seized, they do not complain that they were not given enough time and that had they been given more time they would have reformed themselves. Thus the path of salvation is that they benefit from the time period God has blessed them with and they do not call for the punishment in haste. Its time is fixed; when it will come, no one will be able to stop it.

وَمَآ اَمۡرُنَآ اِلَّا وَاحِدَةٌ كَلَمۡحٍۭ بِالۡبَصَرِ ﴿۵۰﴾[48]

They should not remain under the misconception that God has to make preparations to bring about the punishment and the Day of Judgement and this is what is causing the delay; there is no such impediment in God's way. When He wants to bring it about, He need only order it; not even a repetition of this order will be needed. He also does not require to make elaborate arrangements to give such a directive; it will materialize in the blink of an eye.

وَلَقَدۡ اَهۡلَكۡنَآ اَشۡيَاعَكُمۡ فَهَلۡ مِنۡ مُّدَّكِرٍ ﴿۵۱﴾[49]

Why has a delay in the punishment enticed them to believe that it is a false threat? If it has not come upon them, then they should see that it did come on the previous nations that were destroyed by God as a result; so why don't they learn a lesson from this? The word اَشۡيَاعَكُمۡ refers to nations whose anecdotes have been recounted earlier in the *sūrah*. The implication is that it is a requisite of intellect that man learn a lesson from the fate of others and not believe when everything happens. What use will believing at that time be to him?

وَكُلُّ شَىۡءٍ فَعَلُوۡهُ فِى الزُّبُرِ ﴿۵۲﴾ وَكُلُّ صَغِيۡرٍ وَّكَبِيۡرٍ مُّسۡتَطَرٌ ﴿۵۳﴾[50]

They should also not have the misconception that any of their words or deeds is beyond the knowledge of God. Whatever they have done, whether minute or massive has been recorded. God will present to every individual each and everything he had done. The wrongdoer will cry out about the strange nature of the register which recorded every small or big matter in it.

اِنَّ الۡمُتَّقِيۡنَ فِىۡ جَنّٰتٍ وَّنَهَرٍ ﴿۵۴﴾[51]

After the wrong-doers, mentioned here is the fortune of the righteous: they will

48. And Our directive will be fulfilled just once in the blink of an eye.

49. And We destroyed nations like yourselves. So, is there anyone who will take warning from their fate?!

50. And everything they have done is recorded in registers and every matter, small or great, is noted down.

51. Indeed, those who fear God shall dwell in the bliss of gardens and rivers,

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dwell in the bliss of orchards and rivers. The word مُتَّقِيْنَ here occurs in contrast to the word مُجْرِمِيْنَ which refers to those who have denied reward and punishment. Thus, مُتَّقِيْنَ would refer to people who feared being brought into the presence of God and feared punishment. The plural word جَنّٰتٍ shows the expansive nature of Paradise as well as the fact that each person will be given several orchards and within them will be several orchards and mini-orchards. The next *sūrah* will give more details of this. After the word فِيْ an ellipses of the *muḍāf* occurs signifying the fact that they will be surrounded in the bliss of orchards and rivers. Orchards and rivers are inseparable. Without a river, one cannot imagine an orchard. For this reason, almost at every instance in the Qur'ān, whenever an orchard is mentioned, rivers too are alluded to.

فِيْ مَقْعَدِ صِدْقٍ عِنْدَ مَلِيْكٍ مُّقْتَدِرٍ ﴿٥٥﴾[52]

Indicated here is the real success of the believers: this eternal bliss of Paradise will be given to them in a place of permanent honour before a Mighty King. It is this proximity to God makes Paradise into Paradise otherwise it is nothing more than an orchard.

The annexure مَقْعَدِ of صِدْقٍ to shows the formers' permanence and repute just as these meanings are found in the expression لِسَانَ صِدْقٍ (26:84). The implication is that the honour they will receive by being in the presence of God will neither be a pretentious display nor temporary so that no one can be held responsible if this honour is taken away after a while.

In the expression عِنْدَ مَلِيْكٍ مُّقْتَدِرٍ the word مَلِيك has more emphasis than مِلْك. The attribute مُّقْتَدِرٍ further stresses it. The implication is that the king of the heavens and the earth is not king just in name as the Idolaters and some misguided sects believe and who regard God to be a remote being who no longer plays any role in their lives; the fact is that He possesses a vast dominion.

The word عِنْدَ points to another reality as well: the highest status a person can attain is that he will be able to attain an honourable place near the King of the heavens and the earth. He will never merge into God and become God as is claimed by some esoteric *sufis*.

With the grace of God, I come to the end of the exegesis of this *sūrah*. فَالْحَمْدُ لِلّٰهِ عَلٰى ذَالِكَ (gratitude be to God on this).

Lahore,
11th August 1977 AD
25th Sha'bān 1397 AH_____

52. A place of permanent honour, before a Mighty King.

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Tadabbur i Qur’ān

Sūrah al-Raḥmān (55)

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Sūrah al-Raḥmān

Tone of the *Sūrah* and its Relationship with the Previous one

Some people have regarded this *sūrah* to be Madīnan. However, in my opinion, not a single verse of it appears to be Madīnan much less the whole *sūrah*. The whole *sūrah* has the same tone and rhythm and a reader clearly feels that it was revealed in one episode.

With regard to its tone, this *sūrah* belongs to that category of *sūrahs* which were revealed at the time of the Prophet's Makkan life in which his opponents, in their fury to refute him, had become adamant on a demand: unless a sign of punishment was shown to them, they were not ready to accept the fact that if they rejected the call of this new faith, they would be punished; they were also not willing to accept the fact that a day was to come when they would encounter eternal punishment and everlasting humiliation.

Because of this mentality of stubbornness and obduracy, the verse وَلَقَدْ يَسَّرْنَا الْقُرْاٰنَ لِلذِّكْرِ فَهَلْ مِنْ مُّدَّكِرٍ was repeated in the previous *sūrah.* Now in this *sūrah* the verse فَبِاَيِّ اٰلَآءِ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبٰنِ is repeated again and again. Obviously this style of directing attention to one specific thing is adopted when either the addressee is so stubborn that he is not ready to accept anything against his wishes or he is such a dunce that unless he is spoon fed and called to attention on each and every point he cannot be expected to understand any thing rational.

Keeping the mentality of the addressee and his temperament in consideration is essential for any discourse. If a speaker is not able to keep this in consideration, his discourse will neither be in accordance with the situation nor will it be eloquent. Those who have no idea of these requirements of a discourse are unable to judge the positive aspects and subtleties of such a discourse. They regard the repetition of a verse to be a needless recurrence, which obviously is a defect of the discourse. Consequently, some foolish people have objected on this recurrence found in this *sūrah*. The fact is that if they understand the nature of people who this *sūrah* addresses, they will exclaim that at every instance the recurring verse is fully embedded in its context the way a pearl is embedded in a ring.

In Sūrah al-Qamar, the obdurate people of the Quraysh were told to learn a lesson from messengers and the history of their people; why are they adamant to believe only when they see the scourge with their very eyes; it is a great favour of the Almighty that to educate and remind them He has revealed a book which is very appropriate for

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this objective. Now in this *sūrah*, this subject is brought up in a new and unique way. They are told that it is the merciful nature of the Almighty because of which He has taught them the Qur'ān. It was a requirement of their nature that for this purpose only the Qur'ān be revealed. If He has taught them the ability of speech, it means that they can understand and make others understand as well. It is a right of this exalted ability that instead of the lash of punishment it be made the means of their education. However, it is their misfortune, that instead of benefiting from God's mercy and favour, they are hastily demanding a new sign. If they want a sign, why do not they deliberate on the signs of the heavens and the earth and the world found inside man and that outside him – all of which they observe daily and which teach them the same lesson which the Qur'ān is teaching? What is the need for some new sign in their presence? After this, each and every sign of the heavens and earth is pinpointed and the attention of these obdurate people is directed towards each of them. What more signs do they want? Alas! How many of their Lord's signs will they deny?

Some Difficulties of this *Sūrah*

As far as the difficulties of the *sūrah* relating to the style, language and interpretation are concerned, they shall *insha'Allāh* be dealt with under the relevant verses of the *sūrah.* However, there are two things which I would like to clarify here in the introduction so that explaining them again and again is not required. The first of these relates to research on the word آلاء and the second to the nature of address in the verse: فَبِاَيِّ اٰلَآءِ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبٰنِ.

The word آلاء is the plural of إِلْيٌ and أَلىٌ and إِلىٌ. All the leading lexicographers and exegetes regard it to mean "favours." However, my mentor, Ḥamīd al-Dīn al-Farāhī in his *Mufradāt al-Qur'ān* has differed with this opinion. In his opinion, this word does not merely come in the meaning referred to above; it has a wider connotation. He begins his discussion on this issue with the following words:[1]

> Even though there is a consensus that the word آلاء means "favours," the Qur'ān and classical Arabic literature does not support this claim. It is evident through a comprehensive analysis of classical Arabic poetry that its real meaning is feats, miracles, marvels of nature and wisdom. However, a greater part of God's miracles and marvels is based on His signs of mercy. For this reason, people concluded that the real meaning of آلاء is "favours."

In this regard, al-Farāhī has also presented his interpretation of a narrative attributed to Ibn 'Abbās (rta) in which he mentions that this word means "favours." He says that our illustrious scholars of the past would answer a question posed to them keeping in

1. Ḥamīd al-Dīn al-Farāhī, *Mufradāt al-Qur'ān*, 1st ed. (Azamgarh: Maṭba' Iṣlāḥ, 1358 AH), 11.

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view the occasion and background. They would specify that at a particular instance the word had been used in a particular meaning.

After these introductory sentences, he has presented corroboratory evidence in support of his view from the works of poets belonging to the age of *jāhiliyyah* as well as from certain Ḥamāsī poets. The poets from the age of *jāhiliyyah* include: Ṭarfah, Mayyah bint Ḍarār**,** Muhalhal, Rabi'ah ibn Maqrūm, Ajda' al-Hamadānī, Fuḍālah ibn Zayd and Khansā'. It is evident from this material that in the works of famous poets of the age of *jāhiliyyah* – poets whose poetry is regarded to be a source of language and morphology, this word is not merely used to mean "favours;" it has a much wider connotation that includes favours, power, majesty, signs, miracles, marvels, feats and other similar connotations.

It is a source of great pleasure for me that the translators and exegetes of these times are referring to the research of Imām Farāhī (even though without properly citing him). However, since the works of Imām Farāhī are in Arabic, people who do not have a strong grasp of it are misled. It is evident from this discussion that he does not contest that the meaning of this word is "favours;" however, he does contest that this is its only meaning.

All the exegetes are unanimous that the verse فَبِاَيِّ اٰلَآءِ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبٰنِ addresses both man and jinn. The Qur'ān itself has explained this in various styles in this *sūrah*. However, two questions arise here. First, just as the message of the Qur'ān is meant for mankind, is it also for the jinnkind? If the answer to this question is in the affirmative, then a further question arises: Did the Prophet Muḥammad (sws) conclusively convey the truth from the Almighty to the jinn also just as he did to his people?

The answer to this question, in my opinion, is that keeping in view the principles set forth by the Almighty in the Qur'ān regarding sending His prophets and the nature of their responsibility in disseminating their message, it is difficult to say that the Prophet (sws) was also sent towards the jinn and that just as he had conclusively communicated the truth to his people, he had also done so to the jinn. It is mentioned in the Qur'ān in various styles that the prophet sent to a nation is from among them; he speaks in their tongue and is the best representative of their nature; by setting an example, he encourages the good in people and discourages the evil in them and for this reason his life becomes an example for every person. It is obvious that none of these things is possible for the Prophet (sws) viz a viz the jinn.

Moreover, it is also known that he has not informed us of any efforts he made in calling the jinn to faith and in reforming and instructing them just as he did so in the case of his people. What at most can be claimed is that he did meet a group of jinn once or twice or that a group of jinn had heard the Qur'ān from the Prophet (sws) and had expressed their liking for it. It is mentioned earlier in Sūrah al-Aḥqāf and a mention is coming up in Sūrah al-Jinn that a group of jinn had heard a few verses of the Qur'ān from the blessed tongue of the Prophet (sws) and liked them. At these places too, it is specified that the Prophet (sws) did not directly come to know of this

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liking; he was informed of it by the Almighty. Such chance meetings are obviously not enough for the dissemination of a message and its conclusive communication which every prophet and messenger did for his people and for which purpose a messenger is in fact sent to his people. If the jinn are addressed in this way in some places in the Qur'ān, it is not because they are its direct addressees; the actual reason, in my opinion, is that just as when the clouds of mercy send down rain which drenches both dry and damp areas, in a similar manner, the mercy of the Qur'ān at times extends to the jinn – specially in those matters of principle which are common between them and man. The concepts of monotheism, the day of judgement, the reward and punishment which will take place on it, the truth, justice and other similar things are absolutely the same in both these creatures. If there is a difference, it relates to those areas which pertain to peculiarities of genre of the two. The real objective of this *sūrah*, as has been discussed earlier, is to remind unmindful people of the signs of power, wisdom, mercy and providence of God and to jolt and awaken them. For this reason, besides addressing the unmindful among mankind, it also addresses the unmindful jinn. This awe and dread of the discourse, as a result, has spread to the whole world.

It is possible that in the light of this discussion a question arise in someone's mind: just as prophets and messengers have been sent to mankind from among them, similarly prophets and messengers from among the jinn must have been sent to them and would have taken up the responsibility of reforming and instructing them in their language and keeping in view the characteristics of their genre. I accept the responsibility of this inference. It is in complete accordance with sense and reason and also in absolute harmony with the practice of God regarding His prophets and messengers as enshrined in the Qur'ān at many instances. If the jinn like mankind are creatures who have been given the freedom to exercise their will and who will be held accountable by God for their deeds and will be accordingly rewarded and punished, then it is essential as per the practice of God for their guidance, prophets and messengers must have been sent to them and it is also essential that they must have called them to the truth in their own language. In my opinion, there is not a single verse in the Qur'ān which goes against this inference. On the contrary, there are various verses which clearly go in its favour.

In Sūrah al-Baqarah, where the incident of Adam (sws) and Satan is mentioned, both of them are addressed at the end in the following words:

قُلْنَا اهْبِطُوْا مِنْهَا جَمِيْعًا ۚ فَاِمَّا يَاْتِيَنَّكُمْ مِّنِّيْ هُدًى فَمَنْ تَبِعَ هُدَايَ فَلَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَ لَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُوْنَ.

(۳۸:۲)

We ordered: "Go [out] from here; then if ever comes to you any guidance from Me, then whosoever follows My guidance will have no fear, nor shall they grieve." (2:38)

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In the above mentioned verse, just as the Almighty has promised Adam and his progeny that He will send guidance to them, He has also made this very promise with Iblīs and His progeny.

Similarly, it is clearly stated in Sūrah al-An'ām that messengers were also sent to the jinn:

يٰمَعْشَرَ الْجِنِّ وَالْاِنْسِ اَلَمْ يَاْتِكُمْ رُسُلٌ مِّنْكُمْ يَقُصُّوْنَ عَلَيْكُمْ اٰيٰتِيْ وَيُنْذِرُوْنَكُمْ لِقَآءَ يَوْمِكُمْ هٰذَا ؕ قَالُوْا شَهِدْنَا عَلٰٓى اَنْفُسِنَا وَغَرَّتْهُمُ الْحَيٰوةُ الدُّنْيَا وَشَهِدُوْا عَلٰٓى اَنْفُسِهِمْ اَنَّهُمْ كَانُوْا كٰفِرِيْنَ. (٦:١٣٠)

"O Jinn and Mankind! Did there not come to you messengers of your own who proclaimed to you My revelations and warned you of this day of resurrection?" They will reply: "We bear witness against our own souls." And indeed, the life of this world deceived them and they themselves testified against their own selves that they had been disbelievers. (6:130)

The coherence in this *sūrah* is very evident. The *sūrah* begins with the declaration that the Qur'ān is a manifestation of the graciousness of the Almighty. The Almighty created man and specially blessed him with the power of speech and comprehension. These grand favours and abilities entail that man should be taught and educated with the most grand heavenly work –the Qur'ān – and not through torment and punishment. It is the extreme misfortune of those who, instead of seeking guidance from it, demand to see the promised doom.

After this, the various signs in the world around man and those within him are pointed to and two of the Almighty's creations – men and jinn– are repeatedly warned and jolted to reflect on them and asked how many such signs would they deny.

First and foremost are mentioned those signs and manifestations which point to the fact that the Almighty greatly cherishes justice and does not approve anything contrary to justice and equity at all in the world He has created.

These are followed by those signs which indicate that the tremendous and extremely vast system of sustenance which the Almighty has established on the earth entails that man shall one day be held accountable for the profound blessings he has been given. Those who deserve to be rewarded shall be rewarded, and those who deserve to be punished shall be punished.

A reference is then made to the fact that it is the Almighty who has created men and jinn from fire and clay and He can easily create them a second time. There is no difficulty for Him in this regard.

This whole Universe is under His control; He is the Lord of the East and the West. Whatever rises, rises with His permission and whatever sets, sets with His permission.

After this, it is asserted that the conflicting elements in the universe are in harmony with one another to fulfil a greater purpose which is over and above their creation. This bears witness to the fact that a sovereign will is dominant over these elements which

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creates harmony between them and uses them for the collective welfare of the universe. If this were not so, the universe would have been destroyed by a clash between its conflicting elements. That it is surviving is ample testimony to the fact that a single supreme and omnipotent power controls it.

An indication is then made that God alone is immortal and all the rest are mortal.

Next it is expressed that all except the Almighty are needy and He is the only one who fulfils their needs. The foolish who ask from others actually receive from Him alone.

An affirmation is then made of the fact that the day wherein accountability of deeds shall take place is certain to come and on that day no one – neither man nor jinn – will be able to run away from the Almighty's grasp. On that day, no evidence will be needed to convict a criminal as his forehead will bear witness to his sins. He will then be grabbed by his forehead and feet and flung into Hell.

Next, the features and characteristics of the Paradise which the *muqarrabīn* shall receive are delineated, followed by the features and characteristics of the Paradise which the *aṣḥāb al-yamīn* will be blessed with.

Section I (Verses 1-30)

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِيْمِ

اَلرَّحْمٰنُ ۙ﴿۱﴾ عَلَّمَ الْقُرْاٰنَ ؕ﴿۲﴾ خَلَقَ الْاِنْسَانَ ۙ﴿۳﴾ عَلَّمَهُ الْبَيَانَ ﴿۴﴾ اَلشَّمْسُ وَالْقَمَرُ بِحُسْبَانٍ ﴿۵﴾ وَّالنَّجْمُ وَالشَّجَرُ
يَسْجُدٰنِ ﴿۶﴾ وَالسَّمَآءَ رَفَعَهَا وَوَضَعَ الْمِيْزَانَ ۙ﴿۷﴾ اَلَّا تَطْغَوْا فِي الْمِيْزَانِ ﴿۸﴾ وَاَقِيْمُوا الْوَزْنَ بِالْقِسْطِ وَلَا تُخْسِرُوا الْمِيْزَانَ ﴿۹﴾
وَالْاَرْضَ وَضَعَهَا لِلْاَنَامِ ۙ﴿۱۰﴾ فِيْهَا فَاكِهَةٌ ۙ وَّالنَّخْلُ ذَاتُ الْاَكْمَامِ ۖ﴿۱۱﴾ وَالْحَبُّ ذُو الْعَصْفِ وَالرَّيْحَانُ ﴿۱۲﴾ فَبِاَيِّ اٰلَآءِ رَبِّكُمَا
تُكَذِّبٰنِ ﴿۱۳﴾ خَلَقَ الْاِنْسَانَ مِنْ صَلْصَالٍ كَالْفَخَّارِ ۙ﴿۱۴﴾ وَخَلَقَ الْجَآنَّ مِنْ مَّارِجٍ مِّنْ نَّارٍ ﴿۱۵﴾ فَبِاَيِّ اٰلَآءِ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبٰنِ ﴿۱۶﴾
رَبُّ الْمَشْرِقَيْنِ وَرَبُّ الْمَغْرِبَيْنِ ﴿۱۷﴾ فَبِاَيِّ اٰلَآءِ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبٰنِ ﴿۱۸﴾ مَرَجَ الْبَحْرَيْنِ يَلْتَقِيٰنِ ۙ﴿۱۹﴾ بَيْنَهُمَا بَرْزَخٌ لَّا يَبْغِيٰنِ ﴿۲۰﴾
فَبِاَيِّ اٰلَآءِ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبٰنِ ﴿۲۱﴾ يَخْرُجُ مِنْهُمَا اللُّؤْلُؤُ وَالْمَرْجَانُ ﴿۲۲﴾ فَبِاَيِّ اٰلَآءِ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبٰنِ ﴿۲۳﴾ وَلَهُ الْجَوَارِ الْمُنْشَـَٔاتُ فِي
الْبَحْرِ كَالْاَعْلَامِ ﴿۲۴﴾ فَبِاَيِّ اٰلَآءِ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبٰنِ ﴿۲۵﴾ كُلُّ مَنْ عَلَيْهَا فَانٍ ﴿۲۶﴾ وَّيَبْقٰى وَجْهُ رَبِّكَ ذُو الْجَلٰلِ وَالْاِكْرَامِ ﴿۲۷﴾
فَبِاَيِّ اٰلَآءِ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبٰنِ ﴿۲۸﴾ يَسْـَٔلُهٗ مَنْ فِي السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ ؕ كُلَّ يَوْمٍ هُوَ فِيْ شَاْنٍ ﴿۲۹﴾ فَبِاَيِّ اٰلَآءِ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبٰنِ ﴿۳۰﴾

In the name of God, the Most-Gracious, the Ever-Merciful.

It is the Merciful who has taught the Qur'ān. He created man; taught him speech. (1-4)

The sun and the moon pursue their ordered course. And the stars and the trees also bow down in adoration. And He raised high the sky and placed the balance in it so that you too should not transgress that balance. And weigh justly and do not measure less. (5-9)

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And He laid out the earth for His creatures. In it are fruits, dates in coverings, chaff-covered grain and scented flowers – So, O Jinn and Men! So, which of your Lord's blessings would you deny? (10-13)

He created man from potter's clay, and the jinn from the flame of fire. So, which of your Lord's powers would you deny? (14-16)

He alone is the Lord of both borders of the East and He alone is the Lord of both borders of the West. So, which of your Lord's majesties would you deny? (17-18)

He has let loose the two oceans: they meet one another. Yet between them is a barrier which they cannot cross. So, which of your Lord's miracles would you deny? (19-21)

Pearls and corals come out from both. So, which of your Lord's wonders would you deny? (22-23)

In His control are ships which are like mountains rising above the ocean. So, which of your Lord's marvels would you deny? (24-25)

All that lives on the earth is destined to die and only the glorious and majestic person of your Lord will abide forever. So, which of your Lord's majesties would you deny? (26-28)

And whatever is in the heavens and the earth ask from Him alone. At all times, His majesty has a newer manifestation. So, which of your Lord's majesties would you deny? (29-30)

Explanation

اَلرَّحْمٰنُ ۙ﴿۱﴾ عَلَّمَ الْقُرْاٰنَ ؕ﴿۲﴾[2]

The implication of this verse is that it is a special favour of God that He has revealed a thing as blessed and merciful as the Qur'ān for their instruction. Had He wanted, He could have sent punishment as per their demand; however, out of His great mercy He blessed them with a benevolent scripture so that they could read and understand it and in the light of its guidance reform their misguided concepts and deeds. As a result, they would be able to succeed in this world as well as in the next. In short, when the Merciful God has blessed them with His mercy, why do they demand His punishment instead of demanding His mercy?

خَلَقَ الْاِنْسَانَ ۙ﴿۳﴾ عَلَّمَهُ الْبَيَانَ ﴿۴﴾[3]

The implication of these verses is that besides God's mercy, the creation of man and his abilities also require that instead of torment, a scripture of guidance be sent down. God created man and taught him speech. This power of speech bears witness that the Creator has made him into a sane and sensible person. He has the ability to hear and

2. It is the Merciful who has taught the Qur'ān.
3. He created man; taught him speech.

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understand things and is able to distinguish good from evil. He can communicate this to others also and make them understand as well. When he is blessed with these multifarious abilities, then this clearly shows that God wants that He teach him through speech and not through the lash which teaches animals.

Here it needs to be appreciated that the ability of speech given to man bears witness to other multifarious abilities found in him. A natural corollary of the faculty of speech is that man has intellect, he can derive principles from parts and vice versa and simulate parts from principles. He has the ability to reason, to infer and to form opinions. For this very reason, Aristotle regards this ability of man as one which distinguishes him from animals. If he is devoid of this ability, then he is not fit to be called a human being; he is merely an animal which walks on two legs. It is evident from this fact that those who, instead of understanding a reality on the basis of reasoning, insist that they will only believe in it after seeing it are no less than animals even though they may be living in grand houses.

اَلشَّمْسُ وَالْقَمَرُ بِحُسْبَانٍ ۝۵ وَّالنَّجْمُ وَالشَّجَرُ يَسْجُدٰنِ ۝۶[4]

Attention is drawn to the signs found in this universe; if signs are required to substantiate the warnings of the Qur'ān, then why should people wait for a new sign? They should just observe the heavens above them; they should see how the sun and the moon adhere to their paths with such punctuality and discipline. There is never a discrepancy even of a second. People should also see how these heavenly bodies are observing the limits set for them by the Almighty. Never does the sun exceed its ordained path to intrude into the path ordained for the moon nor does the moon intrude into the path ordained for the sun (See, the Qur'ān, 36:40). Does not this sign every day teach man the lesson that if the Creator of this universe has subjected such grand creations as the sun and the moon to certain laws, why will He not subject man to His commands? If man breaks these laws and dares spread anarchy in this world, why would He not punish him? It is most befitting for man to abide by the laws He has implemented in every nook and corner of this universe.

After mentioning how the sun and the moon abide by the limits ordained for them and which in religious parlance is called *taqwā*, mentioned in the verse وَّالنَّجْمُ وَالشَّجَرُ يَسْجُدٰنِ is the prostration of the stars of the heavens and trees of the earth: they bow down before their Creator and through this practice of theirs call upon man that he too must not be rebellious to his Creator and should worship and bow down before Him in full obedience.

The prostration of the stars and the trees is explained at various places of this exegesis. Readers can look it up. Citing it here would only needlessly lengthen the

4. The sun and the moon pursue their ordered course. And the stars and the trees also bow down in adoration.

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discussion.

Some people have interpreted the word النَّجْمُ to mean things like small plants, thorny trees and creepers.[5] Probably, they were not able to understand the purpose of mentioning trees with stars and for this reason they had to make this far-fetched interpretation. The fact is that there exists great commonality in the attributes of the two. The Qur'ān has mentioned at many places the prostration of both the stars and the trees in various styles. It is because of this harmony between the two that they are mentioned together in this verse as well. It shows how the heavens and the earth are in harmony with one another: the Creator of both is the same before Whom the stars of the heavens and the trees of the earth prostrate. It should remain in consideration that Mujāhid, Qatādah and Ḥasan interpret the word النَّجْمُ in its conventional meaning ie stars. Ibn Kathīr[6] too supports their view and has cited the following verse as corroboratory evidence:

اَلَمْ تَرَ اَنَّ اللّٰهَ يَسْجُدُ لَهٗ مَنْ فِي السَّمٰوٰتِ وَمَنْ فِي الْاَرْضِ وَالشَّمْسُ وَالْقَمَرُ وَالنُّجُوْمُ وَالْجِبَالُ وَالشَّجَرُ وَالدَّوَآبُّ. (١٨:٢٢)

Do you not see that those in the heavens and the earth, the sun and the moon and the stars, the mountains and the trees and the beasts – all prostrate before God? (22:18)

وَالسَّمَآءَ رَفَعَهَا وَوَضَعَ الْمِيْزَانَ ۙ[7]

After directing attention to some prominent signs of the heavens, attention is directed towards the heavens themselves: how the Almighty has raised this unfathomable roof without any columns. No one can have an idea of its vastness. In spite of this immeasurable expanse, such is the nature of the balance found in it that no one can point out any fissure or fault in it. At another place, it is stated:

خَلَقَ السَّمٰوٰتِ بِغَيْرِ عَمَدٍ تَرَوْنَهَا وَاَلْقٰى فِي الْاَرْضِ رَوَاسِيَ اَنْ تَمِيْدَ بِكُمْ. (٣١:١٠)

He raised the heavens without visible pillars, and set firm mountains on the earth lest it should fall away with you to one side. (31:10)

In Sūrah al-Mulk, the words are:

الَّذِيْ خَلَقَ سَبْعَ سَمٰوٰتٍ طِبَاقًا ؕ مَا تَرٰى فِيْ خَلْقِ الرَّحْمٰنِ مِنْ تَفٰوُتٍ ؕ فَارْجِعِ الْبَصَرَ ۙ هَلْ تَرٰى مِنْ فُطُوْرٍ. ثُمَّ ارْجِعِ الْبَصَرَ كَرَّتَيْنِ يَنْقَلِبْ اِلَيْكَ الْبَصَرُ خَاسِئًا وَّهُوَ حَسِيْرٌ. (٦٧:٣-٤)

5. See, for example: Ibn Kathir, *Tafsir al-Qur'ān al-'Aẓim*, vol. 4, 271. (*Translator*)
6. Ibid.
7. And He raised high the sky and placed the balance in it.

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He Who created seven heavens one above the other. You will not find any fault with what has been created by the Most Gracious. Look about: can you see any flaw? Look again and again. Your look will come back to you worn out and overcome. (67:3-4)

It is evident from the words بِغَيْرِ عَمَدٍ تَرَوْنَهَا that in order to maintain balance in the roof of the sky, the Almighty has used gravitational columns which cannot be observed.

أَلَّا تَطْغَوْا فِي الْمِيزَانِ ﴿٨﴾[8]

The implication is that the placement of a balance in the sky by the Creator, without which it cannot stay in its shape, informs us of the temperament and nature of the Creator: He wants that man too in his circle of authority should give due regard to balance, justice and equity; he should not create any disturbance in this system otherwise the whole system of sustenance will be inflicted with disorder. The implication is that it is to this system of justice and fairness the Qur'ān is calling man – the system whose testimony is found in every nook and corner of the sky spread above. The Qur'ān is warning people that if they transgress the bounds of justice by being blinded by their arrogance and rebelliousness, they will bear its punishment not only in this world but also in the Hereafter. Why is it that they are not being able to understand such a clear thing whose testimony is borne by every nook and corner of the heavens and the earth? Why are they looking for the lash of punishment by disregarding all these telling signs found around them?

وَأَقِيمُوا الْوَزْنَ بِالْقِسْطِ وَلَا تُخْسِرُوا الْمِيزَانَ ﴿٩﴾[9]

The verse above mentioned a principle. Now in this verse an everyday reality which is based on this principle is brought to notice: When the God below whose sky's roof they live owns the balance and loves justice, they too should not lead the life of dishonesty and deceit; they should weigh and measure with full honesty and not weigh less. While commenting on the anecdote of the Prophet Shu'ayb's people, I have alluded to the fact that weighing and measuring less is not just an isolated evil: it is a horrible sign of the disorder that prevails in a society. A further aspect which is highlighted here is that this evil is in fact against the system of balance and justice on which the Almighty has created the heavens and the earth. If a people accept this disorder, then it means that it is after razing down the very foundation on which the Almighty has built this world. Obviously, the Almighty will never bear such people in the world He has created.

Here another thing which is worthy of consideration is that the same thing has been

8. So that you too should not transgress that balance.
9. And weigh justly and do not measure less.

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stated in a positive and a negative way. A deliberation on the Qur'ān reveals that this style is adopted at instances when not obeying the real directive can lead to very dangerous consequences. It is evident from this that justly weighing and measuring is a directive which has great significance. By its nature, it is a corollary of the system of justice on which the Almighty has created this world. It is also evident from this that a nation which disrupts and disobeys this directive creates disorder in the whole society.

وَالْاَرْضَ وَضَعَهَا لِلْاَنَامِ ﴿١٠﴾ فِيْهَا فَاكِهَةٌ ۙ وَّالنَّخْلُ ذَاتُ الْاَكْمَامِ ﴿١١﴾ وَالْحَبُّ ذُو الْعَصْفِ وَالرَّيْحَانُ ﴿١٢﴾[10]

After directing attention towards the grand manifestations of God found in the heavens, attention is now drawn to the resources of providence found in the earth. The word used for the heavens is رَفَعَ and in contrast the word وَضَعَ is very aptly used for the earth. The implication is that the heavens were raised high like a roof and the earth was spread out like a floor so that this arrangement could become a comfortable abode for His creatures. Moreover, just as the heavens were decked with lamps like the sun, the moon and the stars so that this house was provided with light and heat, similarly various types of fruit, grain and flowers were provided so that its residents obtain their sustenance from them and satisfy their taste-buds and the flowers become a means of providing them with sweet scent and scenic beauty.

Here besides grain, flowers and fruits are specially mentioned to point to the fact that the Almighty has not merely provided man fodder to fill his belly, He has also catered for his aesthetic taste, for his proclivity towards delicacies and for his desire for embellishment. All this does not bear evidence to merely His providence, it also bears evidence to the elaborate nature of His providence. Similarly, the attribute ذُو الْعَصْفِ which qualifies الْحَبُّ and the attribute ذَاتُ الْاَكْمَامِ which qualifies النَّخْلُ show His great favour to His creatures. In other words, He has not just tossed grain and fruit towards man; He has elaborately packed each and every grain and fruit in an amazing manner. Obviously, this elaborate arrangement has been made so that man recognizes the obligation he owes to God's sustenance and favours, remains thankful to Him and while leading his life always keeps in consideration the fact that He who has made all this arrangement without man being entitled to it in any way will not let him go scot-free. He will bring about a day in which man is held accountable for his deeds.

Here an important point relating to رَيْحَانُ is worth mentioning. Some people have interpreted it to mean leaves;[11] however, this word has not been used in this meaning in Arabic nor is there any occasion for it to be used here in this meaning. It seems that these people were confounded by the mention of flowers with grain though there is no connection between the two. This led them to this bizarre interpretation of the word

10. And He laid out the earth for His creatures. In it are fruits, dates in coverings, chaff-covered grain and scented flowers.

11. See, for example: Ibn Kathir, *Tafsir al-Qur'ān al-'Aẓim*, vol. 4, 272. (*Translator*)

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whereas there is a particular reason for this mention, as I have explained above.

فَبِاَیِّ اٰلَآءِ رَبِّکُمَا تُکَذِّبٰنِ ﴿۱۳﴾[12]

This verse will occur repeatedly ahead, and it is the most important verse of the *sūrah*. For this reason, I have explained the meaning of آلاء in the introduction to this *sūrah* as well as the nature of the address to man and jinn found in this verse. However, I will explain one thing here: there is a special reason for mentioning here the rejecters among the jinn with the rejecters among the Quraysh: this campaign of rejection had gained great impetus and the devils among men and jinn had joined hands and were trying their best to defeat the call of the truth. For this reason, the Almighty has addressed them directly and has rebuked them and also challenged them, as will become evident from later verses, that in spite of their profound efforts the true call shall prevail and progress. I have already explained in the introduction to this *sūrah* that it was revealed in that phase of the Makkan period in which the Quraysh were at the peak of their obduracy and hostility. Obviously, in that phase, they must have been supported with special help from the devils among the jinn. The situation required that both these creatures be addressed.

Expressing gratitude on favours to someone who has granted these favours and having a sense of accountability to the providence of God are natural requirements of human nature. A person who benefits from the favours of God but does not acknowledge that as a result he owes some obligation to Him or that he will be held accountable for them shows through this attitude that he denies all these favours. The Qur'ān has rebuked the Quraysh and the jinn who behave similarly on this very denial: on every people before them they can witness the favours of their Lord which remind them (ie. the Quraysh and the jinn) of a day of accountability; however, they are adamantly denying them; so which of the favours and majesties of their Lord will they deny?

خَلَقَ الْاِنْسَانَ مِنْ صَلْصَالٍ کَالْفَخَّارِ ﴿۱۴﴾ وَ خَلَقَ الْجَآنَّ مِنْ مَّارِجٍ مِّنْ نَّارٍ ﴿۱۵﴾ فَبِاَیِّ اٰلَآءِ رَبِّکُمَا تُکَذِّبٰنِ ﴿۱۶﴾[13]

These verses by reminding man and jinn of their creation direct their attention to their re-creation: they should not remain under the misconception that their Lord is unable to recreate them after creating them once, and so the coming about of a day of accountability is an impossibility; they should remember that the very material from which He created them is available to Him in full quantity and God's ability to create also exists just as it existed when He created them the first time; so if they cannot deny their first creation, they also do not have any reason to deny their re-creation.

The word صَلْصَال refers to pure mud and فَخَّارِ refers to mud which becomes dry like a

12. So, O Jinn and Men! So which of your Lord's blessings would you deny?

13. He created man from potter's clay, and the jinn from the flame of fire. So, which of your Lord's powers would you deny?

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potsherd. All the phases through which human life passes until it reaches its culmination in the form of a human being are referred to in the Qur'ān at various places. At one instance, it is said that man is created from a fluid; at another, mud is referred to and, at some others, smelly kneaded clay is alluded to. Similarly, at some places dry mud is mentioned. The final phase mentioned is that from a drop of sperm man's offspring is initiated. These are the evolutionary stages of human life which have already been explained in verse twenty six of Sūrah al-Ḥijr. The purpose of mentioning them is to make man observe within his own self the grandeur, power and wisdom of God so that he is able to comprehend that it is God's majesty which extracted him from fluid and mire and then nourished him in the dry and moderate climate of plateaus and then gradually bestowed him a new shape and set up a system in which he could continue to produce offspring. The objective of stating all these facts is to obviously prove that man's existence – which the Almighty caused to pass through such lengthy processes which culminated in his present form – cannot be purposeless. Simultaneously, another objective is to show that the all-knowing and all-wise God Who can create man from a cell formed from mire can do everything; nothing is beyond Him.

The word مَارِجٍ in وَ خَلَقَ الْجَآنَّ مِنْ مَّارِجٍ مِّنْ نَّارٍ means "flame" which is the essence of fire. Just as man is created from the essence and substance of mud, in a similar manner, the jinn have been created from the substance of fire. Their phases of creation are not mentioned in detail in the Qur'ān. The reason for this is that these phases are of an entirely different nature comprehending which would have been difficult for man.

After this occurs the repetitive verse which has already been explained above. Here it would mean that when they observe these majesties and manifestations of power and wisdom in their own existence, why then do they regard it to be far-fetched that God will create them again for their accountability; how many more signs of God will they deny and how many new ones will they demand?

رَبُّ الْمَشْرِقَيْنِ وَرَبُّ الْمَغْرِبَيْنِ ﴿١٧﴾ فَبِاَيِّ اٰلَآءِ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبٰنِ ﴿١٨﴾[14]

God is the Lord of the East and the West. Neither is there anyone outside His dominion nor does anyone have a share in it. He alone is the owner of all the East and the West. Not an inch of His territory from the heavens and earth is under the control of someone else so that he can save the residents of this territory from God's grasp. In Sūrah al-Ma'ārij, this subject is discussed in the following words: فَلَآ اُقْسِمُ بِرَبِّ الْمَشٰرِقِ وَ الْمَغٰرِبِ اِنَّا لَقٰدِرُوْنَ.عَلٰٓى اَنْ نُّبَدِّلَ خَيْرًا مِّنْهُمْ وَ مَا نَحْنُ بِمَسْبُوْقِيْنَ (٧٠: ٤٠-٤١) (Nay! I swear by the Lord who is the Master of all the vastness of the East and the West that We can create them in a better form and We are not powerless in this regard, (70:40-41)).

Generally, our exegetes are of the opinion that the duals مَشْرِقَيْنِ and مَغْرِبَيْنِ refer to the

14. He alone is the Lord of both borders of the East and He alone is the Lord of both borders of the West. So, which of your Lord's majesties would you deny?

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east and west of the winters and the summer;[15] this however is quite unnatural. The Qur'ān has used these words in the singular, dual and plural and in all these three forms there is not much difference as far as the meaning is concerned. In the case of dual, the objective is to point to both edges and in the case of plural, the objective is to point to their immeasurable vastness. Examples of such usage of the dual and the plural can be seen in the previous volumes of this exegesis.

After this occurs the repetitive verse; such is the power and majesty of God that both East and West are subservient to Him. If they think that the warning sounded by Him are baseless threats, then how many of God's majesties will they deny?

مَرَجَ الْبَحْرَيْنِ يَلْتَقِيٰنِ ﴿١٩﴾ بَيْنَهُمَا بَرْزَخٌ لَّا يَبْغِيٰنِ ﴿٢٠﴾ فَبِاَيِّ اٰلَآءِ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبٰنِ ﴿٢١﴾[16]

Stated here is an argument in favour of God's *tawḥīd* viz a viz the harmony found between conflicting elements of nature. There seems an apparent conflict and clash in every part of this universe eg the rising and setting of heavenly bodies, the night and the day, the winter and the summer which should not lead a person to think that there exist different intentions and forces in this universe. If a person looks deep into these phenomena, he will find that in every discord exists a deep concord and harmony. Every object together with its opposite comes together to serve a greater cause. This bears witness to the fact that there is a single intention and will which prevails in this universe that wisely uses all the opposing elements of this universe for its collective benefit. The Almighty lets loose two seas. One of them is bitter and the other is sweet. Both strike one another but He puts an invisible curtain between them so that they do meet one another and also remain separate in their own nature. The sweet water does not become sour and the sour water does not become sweet. It is evident from this that people who were misled by the apparent conflict between elements and regarded this universe to be a place of different wills and intentions and then fashioned their own deities according to their own concepts did not observe the great harmony which is found in every discord and which is the greatest argument of *tawḥīd*.

Then occurs the repetitive verse. The implication is that if even after these signs they are under the misconception that if God seizes them, their deities will save them, then which of God's signs will they deny?

يَخْرُجُ مِنْهُمَا اللُّؤْلُؤُ وَالْمَرْجَانُ ﴿٢٢﴾ فَبِاَيِّ اٰلَآءِ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبٰنِ ﴿٢٣﴾[17]

This verse points to a common collective benefit which is obtained in spite of this

15. See, for example: Ibn Kathir, *Tafsir al-Qur'ān al-'Aẓim*, vol. 4, 272. (*Translator*)

16. He has let loose the two oceans: they meet one another. Yet between them is a barrier which they cannot cross. So, which of your Lord's miracles would you deny?

17. Pearls and corals come out from both. So which of your Lord's wonders would you deny?

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discord: both produce pearls and corals.

Some exegetes[18] have raised the question that pearls and corals only come out of bitter water, while the Qur'ān has claimed here that they come out of both types of water. In my opinion, our exegetes have made a baseless claim. I am citing below the relevant portion from the entry "pearl" found in the Encylopaedia Britannica. It will become evident from it that pearls and corals come out from sweet water as well:

> Freshwater mussels in the temperate zone of the Northern Hemisphere have produced pearls of great value. The freshwater pearls of the US have come principally from the Mississippi river. Pearling has declined greatly in Great Britain, but pearls from the Scottish rivers and from the Conway river in Northern Wales were once in great demand. Pearling is still a carefully fostered industry in central Europe, and the forest streams of Bavaria, in particular, are the source of choice pearls. Freshwater pearling in China has been known before 1000 BC.[19]

Even if it is supposed that the pearls and corals only come out of bitter water, this would not make a difference to the statement of the Qur'ān. It is the law of nature that things are created from the collaboration of opposites. A child is born from a mother and a father. Even though he is nourished in the womb of the mother but in reality he comes into being through both the father and the mother. Similarly, pearls are produced by the interaction of both types of water even though they are nourished in bitter water.

After this, occurs the repetitive verse. Its context and placement is evident.

وَلَهُ الْجَوَارِ الْمُنْشَئٰتُ فِي الْبَحْرِ كَالْاَعْلَامِ ﴿٢٤﴾ فَبِاَيِّ اٰلَآءِ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبٰنِ ﴿٢٥﴾[20]

Attention is directed to another sign which in spite of conflict shows harmony: it is a marvel of God's power that ships which are as huge and hefty as mountains slide on seas whilst the lightest of objects drowns in water. It is a manifestation of God's wisdom and power that an object as heavy as a ship loaded with thousands of tons of cargo sails on water and does not drown. The word لَهُ here means that creating such harmony between discordant elements is only in the authority of God the one and only. It is only because of His power and wisdom that such marvels come into being and man witnesses them at every place, so which of the marvels of his Lord will he deny? This subject is discussed in Sūrah al-Fāṭir in the following words:

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18. See, for example: Ibn Kathir, *Tafsir al-Qur'ān al-'Aẓim*, vol. 4, 273. (*Translator*)
19. *Encyclopedia Britannica*, "Pearls" Micropedia vol 7, 821.
20. In His control are ships which are like mountains rising above the ocean. So, which of your Lord's marvels would you deny?

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وَمَا يَسْتَوِي الْبَحْرٰنِ ۖ هٰذَا عَذْبٌ فُرَاتٌ سَآئِغٌ شَرَابُهٗ وَهٰذَا مِلْحٌ اُجَاجٌ ؕ وَمِنْ كُلٍّ تَاْكُلُوْنَ لَحْمًا طَرِيًّا وَّتَسْتَخْرِجُوْنَ حِلْيَةً تَلْبَسُوْنَهَا ۚ وَتَرَى الْفُلْكَ فِيْهِ مَوَاخِرَ لِتَبْتَغُوْا مِنْ فَضْلِهٖ وَلَعَلَّكُمْ تَشْكُرُوْنَ. (۳۵:۱۲)

And the two seas are not alike. The one is fresh, sweet, and pleasant to drink from, while the other is saltish and bitter. And from both you eat fresh meat, and from both you bring out ornaments to wear. And see how the ships plough their course through them so that you sail away to seek His bounty and so that you remain grateful. (35:12)

In Sūrah Shūrā too this subject has been brought up. For more details, it can be consulted.

كُلُّ مَنْ عَلَيْهَا فَانٍ ﴿۲۶﴾ وَّيَبْقٰى وَجْهُ رَبِّكَ ذُو الْجَلٰلِ وَالْاِكْرَامِ ﴿۲۷﴾ فَبِاَيِّ اٰلَآءِ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبٰنِ ﴿۲۸﴾[21]

The antecedent of the genitive pronoun in عَلَيْهَا is the earth which is under discussion since verse ten. The way the Almighty has arranged for the sustenance of man in the earth, the marvels and wisdom He has showed in his creation, the way He reigns supreme in every nook and corner of the universe and the way His singularity is evident from the harmony between conflicting elements necessitates that one day all these things will be destroyed. Only the exalted and revered person of God will remain. Everyone will be gathered before Him one day and He will deal with everyone in the manner that person is worthy of. No one has the slightest authority to contest His decisions or open his mouth to intercede for someone without His permission.

The words ذُو الْجَلٰلِ وَالْاِكْرَامِ also occur in the last verse of the *sūrah*. The purpose of mentioning both these words is that only He is exalted in His being and thus only He is worthy of being respected and revered by all. No one else shares these attributes with Him. The word وَجْهُ (face) here signifies the person of God. Face is the most lofty portion of a being; for this reason, at times, it signifies the whole person.

At the end, occurs the repetitive verse. It means that whether they hear the warnings of the Prophet or not, one day everyone will be destroyed and only the person of God the Almighty will remain; so which of the signs of their Lord do they deny?

يَسْـَٔلُهٗ مَنْ فِي السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ ؕ كُلَّ يَوْمٍ هُوَ فِيْ شَاْنٍ ﴿۲۹﴾ فَبِاَيِّ اٰلَآءِ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبٰنِ ﴿۳۰﴾[22]

The implication of this verse is that God is the real person to whom everyone turns.

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21. All that lives on the earth is destined to die and only the glorious and majestic person of your Lord will abide forever. So, which of your Lord's majesties would you deny?

22. And whatever is in the heavens and the earth ask from Him alone. At all times, His majesty has a newer manifestation. So, which of your Lord's majesties would you deny?

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Whoever receives anything receives it from Him. The word سوال (*sawāl*) is used here with regard to its consequences: since everyone who asks receives from God alone, hence irrespective of whom he asks, he in reality asks God for it. Asking from others is useless and ineffective. No one other than God can give him something or take away anything from him. Hence, presenting one's wishes to someone while regarding him to be the granter of wishes is mere foolishness. Whatever a person receives in this world, he receives from God alone and whatever he will receive in the Hereafter, he will receive from God only.

This word also means "needs" as in سَوَآءً لِّلسَّآئِلِيْنَ (٤١:١٠) (equal for all those in need, (41:10)). If the verse is interpreted while keeping in view this meaning, it would mean that all those in the heavens and the earth are needy and dependent on God.

The implication of the words كُلَّ يَوْمٍ هُوَ فِيْ شَاْنٍ is that people should not remain under the misconception that after creating this world, the Almighty has consigned its administration to their alleged deities and Himself has absolutely no role to play in this regard. Those who are under this delusion are absolutely unaware of God's majesty. God Himself is running all the affairs of this world. He alone controls the movements of the sun and the moon and He alone fulfils the needs of His people on this earth. Hence, at every moment of time He is doing something. The word يَوْمٌ here means "time" and it is used in this meaning at many places in the Qur'ān. The implication is that when the Almighty Himself is running the affairs of this world, what need remains of any intercessor? Hence whatever a person wants, he should ask God for it.

After this occurs the repetitive verse and means that the Almighty has not isolated Himself from the affairs of this world; He is continuously involved in managing and controlling them. His majesty and grandeur is evident from every nook and corner of this universe. So which of these majesties will they deny?

سَنَفْرُغُ لَكُمْ اَيُّهَ الثَّقَلٰنِ ﴿٣١﴾ فَبِاَيِّ اٰلَآءِ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبٰنِ ﴿٣٢﴾[23]

The word الثَّقَلٰنِ refers to both jinnkind and mankind. Since in their collective capacity both become heavy, the word الثَّقَلٰنِ has been used. Its usage points to the gravity of the challenge which has been thrown in this verse to both man and jinn at the same time. The implication is that however weighty and hefty they may be in their collective capacity, the Almighty will soon confine all His attention to dealing with them. Confining attention to them here refers to the fact that at the moment this world is functioning, and God's wisdom too requires that it complete its term; however, not far off is the time when this term will reach its completion. At that time, the Almighty will be free from running this world and direct all His attention to man's accountability. He will hold each and every person responsible for his deeds and after

23. Both you groups! We are about to find time for you! So, which of your Lord's majesties would you deny?

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judging him shall accordingly reward or punish him. The style and words used also show that the Almighty will not attempt this task in a superficial manner; He will do it with full devotion. This is because it is this task which is the real objective of creating this world. Without it, this world is purposeless.

After this occurs the repetitive verse. Here it means that they have rejected all the obvious signs of this world which point to their accountability; however, what will they do when they will see the Day of Judgement and the court of God with their very eyes. Will they deny that at that time too? If they deny, then how many signs of their Lord will they deny?

Section II (Verses 31-45)

In the succeeding verses, the Day which people are being warned of is portrayed. The coherence and sequence in the discourse is obvious. Readers may now proceed to read these verses.

يٰمَعۡشَرَ الۡجِنِّ وَ الۡاِنۡسِ اِنِ اسۡتَطَعۡتُمۡ اَنۡ تَنۡفُذُوۡا مِنۡ اَقۡطَارِ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَ الۡاَرۡضِ فَانۡفُذُوۡا ؕ لَا تَنۡفُذُوۡنَ اِلَّا بِسُلۡطٰنٍ ﴿۳۳﴾
فَبِاَیِّ اٰلَآءِ رَبِّکُمَا تُکَذِّبٰنِ ﴿۳۴﴾ یُرۡسَلُ عَلَیۡکُمَا شُوَاظٌ مِّنۡ نَّارٍ ۙ وَّ نُحَاسٌ فَلَا تَنۡتَصِرٰنِ ﴿۳۵﴾ فَبِاَیِّ اٰلَآءِ رَبِّکُمَا تُکَذِّبٰنِ ﴿۳۶﴾
فَاِذَا انۡشَقَّتِ السَّمَآءُ فَکَانَتۡ وَرۡدَۃً کَالدِّهَانِ ﴿۳۷﴾ فَبِاَیِّ اٰلَآءِ رَبِّکُمَا تُکَذِّبٰنِ ﴿۳۸﴾ فَیَوۡمَئِذٍ لَّا یُسۡـَٔلُ عَنۡ ذَنۡۢبِهٖۤ اِنۡسٌ وَّ لَا جَآنٌّ ﴿۳۹﴾ فَبِاَیِّ اٰلَآءِ رَبِّکُمَا تُکَذِّبٰنِ ﴿۴۰﴾ یُعۡرَفُ الۡمُجۡرِمُوۡنَ بِسِیۡمٰهُمۡ فَیُؤۡخَذُ بِالنَّوَاصِیۡ وَ الۡاَقۡدَامِ ﴿۴۱﴾ فَبِاَیِّ اٰلَآءِ رَبِّکُمَا تُکَذِّبٰنِ ﴿۴۲﴾ هٰذِهٖ جَهَنَّمُ الَّتِیۡ یُکَذِّبُ بِهَا الۡمُجۡرِمُوۡنَ ﴿۴۳﴾ یَطُوۡفُوۡنَ بَیۡنَهَا وَ بَیۡنَ حَمِیۡمٍ اٰنٍ ﴿۴۴﴾ فَبِاَیِّ اٰلَآءِ رَبِّکُمَا تُکَذِّبٰنِ ﴿۴۵﴾

O Groups of Mankind and Jinn! If you have power to escape from the confines of the heavens and earth, then try to escape! You shall not be able to do so without permission. So which of your Lord's authorities would you deny? Flames of fire shall be hurled at you and pieces of brass. Then you would not be able to shield yourself. So, which of your Lord's powers would you deny? (31-36)

So, remember the time when the sky splits asunder, and reddens like skin. So, which of the wonders of your Lord would you deny? Thus on that day, there will be no need to ask either man or jinn of his sins. So, which of your Lord's majesties would you deny? The wrongdoers will be recognized by their signs; thus they shall be seized by their forelocks and their feet [and thrown in Hell]. So, which of your Lord's powers would you deny? This is the Hell which the wrongdoers had kept denying. They shall circle between it and its boiling water. So, which of your Lord's majesties would you deny? (37-45)

Explanation

يٰمَعۡشَرَ الۡجِنِّ وَ الۡاِنۡسِ اِنِ اسۡتَطَعۡتُمۡ اَنۡ تَنۡفُذُوۡا مِنۡ اَقۡطَارِ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَ الۡاَرۡضِ فَانۡفُذُوۡا ؕ لَا تَنۡفُذُوۡنَ اِلَّا بِسُلۡطٰنٍ ﴿۳۳﴾

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فَبِاَیِّ اٰلَآءِ رَبِّکُمَا تُکَذِّبٰنِ ﴿۳۳﴾[24]

If they think that they are accountable before no one and have absolute authority, they should just attempt to cross the boundaries of the heavens and the earth created by God so that it can be proven that they are beyond God's control or can be beyond His control.

The word سُلْطٰنٍ means "authority" as well as "permission." Here it is used in the second of these meanings. However much as they may want to cross the boundaries of the heavens and the earth, they cannot do so. This is only possible when they have the passport to do so and obviously it is only God who can grant this to them.

Then occurs the repetitive verse. Here it would mean that if they are not being able to comprehend even this sign of being helpless and powerless before God, then what other signs and majesties of their Lord will they continue to deny?

یُرْسَلُ عَلَیْکُمَا شُوَاظٌ مِّنْ نَّارٍ ۙ وَّنُحَاسٌ فَلَا تَنْتَصِرٰنِ ﴿۳۵﴾ فَبِاَیِّ اٰلَآءِ رَبِّکُمَا تُکَذِّبٰنِ ﴿۳۶﴾[25]

The implication is that if anyone from among them tries to exceed the bounds and limits set by God, he shall be pelted with flames of fire and molten brass, and such shall be the profuse nature of this bombardment that that they will not be able to save themselves from it.

The words شُوَاظٌ مِّنْ نَّارٍ refer to shooting stars about which the Qur'ān has specified that they are pelted at the devils among the jinn who try to penetrate to the higher heavens and eavesdrop on the matters of the unseen. The Qur'ān has cited this admission of the jinnfolk through their own words: وَّاَنَّا ظَنَنَّآ اَنْ لَّنْ نُّعْجِزَ اللّٰهَ فِی الْاَرْضِ وَلَنْ نُّعْجِزَهٗ هَرَبًا (۷۲:۱۲) (and that we acknowledge that we cannot escape God's grasp by setting off to some place in this earth or by running away somewhere in the heavens, (72:12)).

Our exegetes have generally regarded the word نُحَاسٌ to mean "smoke."[26] However, this word is not conventionally used in this meaning. Some lexicographers have mentioned it as its rare meaning and have also corroborated this meaning by a couplet of the poet Nābighah Dhubyānī.[27] However, in the first place, the provenance of the couplet itself is debatable and secondly, it is not comprehensible why the Qur'ān would leave the common Arabic word دُخَانٌ which means smoke and which it itself has used and use an unconventional word instead whereas the Qur'ān has been revealed in eloquent Arabic. For this reason, I have my reservations in accepting this meaning of

24. O Groups of Mankind and Jinn! If you have power to escape from the confines of the heavens and earth, then try to escape! You shall not be able to do so without permission. So, which of your Lord's authorities would you deny?

25. Flames of fire shall be hurled at you and molten brass. Then you would not be able to shield yourself. So, which of your Lord's powers would you deny?

26. See, for example: Ibn Kathir, *Tafsir al-Qur'ān al-'Aẓim*, vol. 4, 275. (*Translator*)

27. Ibid.

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the word. In my opinion, the word نُحَاسٌ is used in its conventional meaning and it is a type of shooting star mentioned by the words شُوَاظٌ مِّنْ نَّارٍ.

The reason for this is that scientific research has shown that most shooting stars (also called meteors) dissolve in air as soon as they fall. They fall in the shape of huge balls of siderites and stones; however, the kinetic energy of the objects transforms into heat as soon as it enters the layers of the atmosphere. This dissolves the shooting stars and they get converted into fire-balls and while falling to the earth, most of their metallic and rocky material is lost or they are transformed into gaseous clouds because of the process of condensation. However, the meteors which have been found on earth can be grouped into three categories:

1. Siderites
2. Aerolites
3. Siderolites

Just as ingredients of iron and stone have been found in these meteors, similarly ingredients of bronze and brass are also found in it. The latter have been referred to in this verse by the word نُحَاسٌ. Most of these metallic components dissolve because of heat intensity; however, their presence in the meteors which fall to the earth substantiates the statement of the Qur'ān.[28]

فَإِذَا انْشَقَّتِ السَّمَآءُ فَكَانَتْ وَرْدَةً كَالدِّهَانِ ﴿٣٧﴾ فَبِأَيِّ آلَآءِ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبَانِ ﴿٣٨﴾[29]

Though people have interpreted the word دِهَانِ to mean the sediment of oil,[30] however, this word is also commonly used for skin. Since in this meaning, the word is more appropriate to be qualified by redness, I have preferred it. At another place, the words used are: وَإِذَا السَّمَآءُ كُشِطَتْ (٨١:١١) (and when the skies are stripped bare, (81:11)). In other words just as by stripping the skin, the flesh of the body appears red, similarly, the sky too would appear red. Here this redness is compared with the skin, and this comparison is very apt. It is a description of the arrival of the Day of Judgement. The implication is that today they are denying this day; however, the day will come when the sky shall be rent asunder, and this blue roof will appear like red skin; so what will they do at that time? So which of the majesties of their Lord will they deny? The marvels of His power will keep manifesting themselves.

فَيَوْمَئِذٍ لَّا يُسْئَلُ عَنْ ذَنْۢبِهٖٓ إِنْسٌ وَّلَا جَآنٌّ ﴿٣٩﴾ فَبِأَيِّ آلَآءِ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبَانِ ﴿٤٠﴾ يُعْرَفُ الْمُجْرِمُوْنَ بِسِيْمٰهُمْ فَيُؤْخَذُ

28. *Encyclopedia Britannica*: *Meteorites*, Macropedia, vol 12, 42.

29. So, remember the time when the sky splits asunder, and reddens like skin. So, which of the wonders of your Lord would you deny?

30. See, for example: Ibn Kathir, *Tafsir al-Qur'ān al-'Aẓim*, vol. 4, 276. (*Translator*)

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بِالنَّوَاصِيْ وَالْاَقْدَامِ ﴿٤١﴾ فَبِاَيِّ اٰلَآءِ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبٰنِ ﴿٤٢﴾[31]

They should not remain under the misconception that on that day God and His angels will have to work hard to investigate their crimes. It would not even be required to ask someone of his crime, let alone hard work. On that day, each criminal will be recognized by his face; the extent of his crimes and the punishment he will deserve will be known from his very face.

There are many types of questions. Here the questioning which is refuted relates to investigation and scrutiny. At other places, the Qur'ān has stated the reason why this would not be required: on that day, not merely the limbs of the criminals will bear witness; even the roots of each and every hair will bear witness to his crimes. As far as the questions which relate to rebuke, reprimand and sarcasm are concerned, they are not negated here. The questions which are mentioned in the Qur'ān regarding the criminals are of this second type. Thus there is no contradiction in the Qur'ān in this regard; both types of questions are of distinct nature.

The words فَيُؤْخَذُ بِالنَّوَاصِيْ وَالْاَقْدَامِ depict how these criminals will be thrown into Hell: they shall be brought before the sentinels of Hell with the sign of their crime who will seize them by their forelocks and feet and just as logs of wood are thrown into raging fire, these people shall be thrown into Hell. Here they being thrown into Hell is not stated in words because the way these criminals will be seized signifies this. In the presence of such an indication, such a mention is not required.

The placement of the repetitive verse is very evident: this phase is soon to come before such people; so which of the signs of their Lord will they deny?

هٰذِهٖ جَهَنَّمُ الَّتِيْ يُكَذِّبُ بِهَا الْمُجْرِمُوْنَ ﴿٤٣﴾ يَطُوْفُوْنَ بَيْنَهَا وَبَيْنَ حَمِيْمٍ اٰنٍ ﴿٤٤﴾ فَبِاَيِّ اٰلَآءِ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبٰنِ ﴿٤٥﴾[32]

These verses say that this is the very Hell which the criminals have been denying: the time will finally come when they will circle between its fire and its boiling water. The word آن refers to water whose heat has reached its ultimate temperature. These verses depict their extreme helplessness: when the fire of Hell burns them, they will run in search of water but the water too will be boiling at its ultimate degree. Their life will be spent going to and fro between these two. In Surah al-Ghāshiyah, the words used are: تَصْلٰى نَارًا حَامِيَةً. تُسْقٰى مِنْ عَيْنٍ اٰنِيَةٍ. (٨٨: ٤-٥) (they will enter the blazing fire and they will be made to drink from a sizzling spring. (88:4-5))

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31. Thus on that day, there will be no need to ask neither man nor jinn of his sins. So, which of your Lord's majesties would you deny? The wrongdoers will be recognized by their signs; thus they shall be seized by their forelocks and their feet [and thrown in Hell]. So, which of your Lord's powers would you deny?

32. This is the Hell which the wrongdoers had kept denying. They shall circle between it and its boiling water. So, which of your Lord's majesties would you deny?

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The placement and context of the repetitive verse is evident: today they are denying the Hereafter and the punishment with great stubbornness; however, when they experience all this, what will they do? How many of God's manifestations will they continue to deny?

Section III (Verses 46-78)

After a mention of the fate of the criminals, the forthcoming verses mention the details of reward which the God-fearing will receive in the Hereafter. This comparison brings to light the complete picture of both groups. The coherence in the discourse is very evident. The only thing that needs to be kept in mind is that verses 46-61 mention the details of the Paradise of the *muqarrabīn* (the near ones to God) and the subsequent verses mention the details of the Paradise of the *aṣḥāb al-yamīn* (companions of the right hand). The details of the difference of status between both these groups is mentioned in the next *sūrah*: Sūrah al-Wāqi'ah which forms a pair with the current *sūrah*.

Readers may now proceed to read the coming verses in the light of this background.

وَ لِمَنۡ خَافَ مَقَامَ رَبِّهٖ جَنَّتٰنِ ۚ﴿۴۶﴾ فَبِاَیِّ اٰلَآءِ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبٰنِ ۚ﴿۴۷﴾ ذَوَاتَاۤ اَفۡنَانٍ ۚ﴿۴۸﴾ فَبِاَیِّ اٰلَآءِ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبٰنِ ۚ﴿۴۹﴾
فِیۡهِمَا عَیۡنٰنِ تَجۡرِیٰنِ ۚ﴿۵۰﴾ فَبِاَیِّ اٰلَآءِ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبٰنِ ۚ﴿۵۱﴾ فِیۡهِمَا مِنۡ كُلِّ فَاكِهَةٍ زَوۡجٰنِ ۚ﴿۵۲﴾ فَبِاَیِّ اٰلَآءِ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبٰنِ
﴿۵۳﴾ مُتَّكِـِٕیۡنَ عَلٰی فُرُشٍۭ بَطَآىِٕنُهَا مِنۡ اِسۡتَبۡرَقٍ ؕ وَ جَنَا الۡجَنَّتَیۡنِ دَانٍ ۚ﴿۵۴﴾ فَبِاَیِّ اٰلَآءِ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبٰنِ ۚ﴿۵۵﴾ فِیۡهِنَّ
قٰصِرٰتُ الطَّرۡفِ ۙ لَمۡ یَطۡمِثۡهُنَّ اِنۡسٌ قَبۡلَهُمۡ وَ لَا جَآنٌّ ۚ﴿۵۶﴾ فَبِاَیِّ اٰلَآءِ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبٰنِ ۚ﴿۵۷﴾ كَاَنَّهُنَّ الۡیَاقُوۡتُ وَ الۡمَرۡجَانُ ۚ﴿۵۸﴾
فَبِاَیِّ اٰلَآءِ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبٰنِ ۚ﴿۵۹﴾ هَلۡ جَزَآءُ الۡاِحۡسَانِ اِلَّا الۡاِحۡسَانُ ۚ﴿۶۰﴾ فَبِاَیِّ اٰلَآءِ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبٰنِ ۚ﴿۶۱﴾ وَ مِنۡ دُوۡنِهِمَا
جَنَّتٰنِ ۚ﴿۶۲﴾ فَبِاَیِّ اٰلَآءِ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبٰنِ ۚ﴿۶۳﴾ مُدۡهَآمَّتٰنِ ۚ﴿۶۴﴾ فَبِاَیِّ اٰلَآءِ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبٰنِ ۚ﴿۶۵﴾ فِیۡهِمَا عَیۡنٰنِ نَضَّاخَتٰنِ ۚ﴿۶۶﴾
فَبِاَیِّ اٰلَآءِ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبٰنِ ۚ﴿۶۷﴾ فِیۡهِمَا فَاكِهَةٌ وَّ نَخۡلٌ وَّ رُمَّانٌ ۚ﴿۶۸﴾ فَبِاَیِّ اٰلَآءِ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبٰنِ ۚ﴿۶۹﴾ فِیۡهِنَّ خَیۡرٰتٌ حِسَانٌ
ۚ﴿۷۰﴾ فَبِاَیِّ اٰلَآءِ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبٰنِ ۚ﴿۷۱﴾ حُوۡرٌ مَّقۡصُوۡرٰتٌ فِی الۡخِیَامِ ۚ﴿۷۲﴾ فَبِاَیِّ اٰلَآءِ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبٰنِ ۚ﴿۷۳﴾ لَمۡ یَطۡمِثۡهُنَّ اِنۡسٌ
قَبۡلَهُمۡ وَ لَا جَآنٌّ ۚ﴿۷۴﴾ فَبِاَیِّ اٰلَآءِ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبٰنِ ۚ﴿۷۵﴾ مُتَّكِـِٕیۡنَ عَلٰی رَفۡرَفٍ خُضۡرٍ وَّ عَبۡقَرِیٍّ حِسَانٍ ۚ﴿۷۶﴾ فَبِاَیِّ اٰلَآءِ رَبِّكُمَا
تُكَذِّبٰنِ ۚ﴿۷۷﴾ تَبٰرَكَ اسۡمُ رَبِّكَ ذِی الۡجَلٰلِ وَ الۡاِكۡرَامِ ۚ﴿۷۸﴾

And for those who feared being brought into the presence of their Lord, there shall be two orchards. So, which of your Lord's blessings would you deny? Both will have abundant branches. So, which of your Lord's mercies would you deny? Each will be watered by two springs. So which of your Lord's favours would you deny? In them, each fruit will be of a unique type. So, which of your Lord's bounties would you deny? They shall recline on couches lined with thick brocade, and the fruits of both

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orchards will hang over their heads. So, which of your Lord's favours would you deny? Therein will be bashful houris whom neither man nor jinn would have touched before. So, which of your Lord's gifts would you deny? Houris like rubies and corals. So, which of your Lord's blessings would you deny? The reward of virtue will after all be virtuous? So which of your Lord's virtues would you deny? (46-61)

And besides these, there shall be two other orchards. So, which of your Lord's blessings would you deny? Both will be greenish black. So, which of your Lord's mercies would you deny? A gushing fountain shall flow in each. So, which of your Lord's mercies would you deny? Each will have fruits, dates and pomegranates. So, which of your Lord's favours would you deny? In each there shall be houris, noble and gorgeous. So, which of your Lord's blessings would you deny? Houris, living in tents. So, which of your Lord's graces would you deny? Whom neither man nor jinn would have touched before. So, how many of your Lord's bounties would you deny? They shall recline on green sheet cloths and splendid carpets. So, which of your Lord's favours would you deny? Blessed is the name of your Lord, the Lord of majesty and glory! (62-78)

Explanation

وَلِمَنْ خَافَ مَقَامَ رَبِّهٖ جَنَّتٰنِ ﴿٤٦﴾ فَبِاَيِّ اٰلَآءِ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبٰنِ ﴿٤٧﴾[33]

After the previous verses mention of the fate of the criminals, these refer to the fate of the righteous. Their quality mentioned here is that they fear being brought into the presence of God. A similar allusion to the Day of Judgement is found in the following verse as well: يَّوْمَ يَقُوْمُ النَّاسُ لِرَبِّ الْعٰلَمِيْنَ. (٦:٨٣) (the day when men will rise to stand up before the Lord of the worlds, (83:6)). It needs to be kept in mind that the only thing which keeps a person on the right path is this fear of facing his Lord. If his heart becomes devoid of this fear, then nothing can stop a person from becoming the greatest of criminals.

The verse says that people who fear standing before their Lord will be given two orchards. The word جَنَّتَ of the Qur'ān is a comprehensive expression of all the successes of the Hereafter and two orchards are mentioned as a completion of favour: they will receive two orchards. Surah al-Kahf mentions two orchards in the incident of the companions of the orchards thus: جَعَلْنَا لِاَحَدِهِمَا جَنَّتَيْنِ مِنْ اَعْنَابٍ وَّ حَفَفْنٰهُمَا بِنَخْلٍ. (٣٢:١٨) (to one of them We gave two vineyards surrounded with palm-trees, (18:32)). While explaining this verse, I have written that the two orchards it mentions is for completion of favour: God, out of His favour and grace, had blessed them with two orchards, but these favours led them to be ungrateful instead of being grateful.

After this occurs the repetitive verse, and later it will occur after every mention of a

33. And for those who feared being brought into the presence of their Lord, there shall be two orchards. So, which of your Lord's blessings would you deny?

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favour of Paradise. In order to understand the eloquence of its placement and occasion, one must keep in mind the fact that people who are addressed here, in the first place, regard the Hereafter to be improbable; and if as a hypothetical supposition they were ready to accept it, they were never ready to accept the fact that the destitute Muslims would have a share in the favours received in the Hereafter. They were of the opinion that if Paradise is a reality, then just as they have been blessed with all the favours of this world, they will be blessed with all the favours of the Hereafter as well. In order to quash this mentality and to crush their pride each and every favour of Paradise is singled out and it is stressed that they are specifically for the pious people of God and at the same time these rejecters are asked: Which of God's favours will they deny? Today, they might summarily dismiss the favours of the Hereafter, but how will they deny them when God grants them to His people and they will end up yearning for them?

ذَوَاتَآ اَفْنَانٍ ﴿٤٨﴾ فَبِاَيِّ اٰلَآءِ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبٰنِ ﴿٤٩﴾[34]

This is an expression of the luxuriance and lushness of the two orchards being abundant in trees and vegetation. They will not be desolate and barren: each and every tree will have branches in abundance. After this occurs the repetitive verse. The reason is that the Arabs relished orchards the most and took pride in owning them. How fortunate is a person who possesses a lush green orchard in a dry and hot country! While keeping in view this taste of theirs, it is said that God will bless the righteous with such orchards: so which of God's blessings will they deny?

فِيْهِمَا عَيْنٰنِ تَجْرِيٰنِ ﴿٥٠﴾ فَبِاَيِّ اٰلَآءِ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبٰنِ ﴿٥١﴾[35]

As a guarantee for the luxuriance of these orchards, each will have a fountain running in it. So they should speak up as to which of God's favours will they deny. Thus the occasion and placement of this repetitive verse is very evident.

فِيْهِمَا مِنْ كُلِّ فَاكِهَةٍ زَوْجٰنِ ﴿٥٢﴾ فَبِاَيِّ اٰلَآءِ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبٰنِ ﴿٥٣﴾[36]

Both orchards will not have the same types of fruit. Each will have its own unique repertoire of fruits. The word زَوْج is used here in a specific meaning which I have explained earlier at an appropriate place. After this, occurs the repetitive verse of which the occasion and placement is very evident.

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34. Both will have abundant branches. So, which of your Lord's mercies would you deny?

35. Each will be watered by two springs. So, which of your Lord's favours would you deny?

36. In them, each fruit will be of a unique type. So, how many of your Lord's bounties would you deny?

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مُتَّكِـِٕيْنَ عَلٰى فُرُشٍۭ بَطَآىِٕنُهَا مِنْ اِسْتَبْرَقٍ ؕ وَ جَنَا الْجَنَّتَيْنِ دَانٍ ﴿۵۴﴾ فَبِاَيِّ اٰلَآءِ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبٰنِ ﴿۵۵﴾[37]

These companions of Paradise will recline against cushions on couches of which the cloth will be lined with thick brocade. In other words, who can imagine the outer lining of cloths which are internally lined with brocade? Moreover, the fruits in both orchards will be hanging close to the heads: reaching out to them will be of no bother. After this, occurs the repetitive verse whose occasion and placement are very evident.

فِيْهِنَّ قٰصِرٰتُ الطَّرْفِ ۙ لَمْ يَطْمِثْهُنَّ اِنْسٌ قَبْلَهُمْ وَلَا جَآنٌّ ﴿۵۶﴾ فَبِاَيِّ اٰلَآءِ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبٰنِ ﴿۵۷﴾ كَاَنَّهُنَّ الْيَاقُوْتُ وَالْمَرْجَانُ ﴿۵۸﴾ فَبِاَيِّ اٰلَآءِ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبٰنِ ﴿۵۹﴾[38]

The antecedent of the pronoun in فِيْهِنَّ is all the favours mentioned earlier as well as all the gardens, orchards and castles of Paradise which may not have been mentioned in words but which are understood to be obviously implied. Such use of pronouns is very common in Arabic, and example of this can be seen in the previous pages of this exegesis.

The verses further say that among the eternal bliss of these orchards and their resources, there will also be bashful and modest maidens. Such is the nature of a man that unless he has his wife with him he is not able to fully enjoy all these favours. God has made her his partner who shares his joys and sorrows with him. Thus while praising them, the verse says that they shall be bashful and modest. Bashfulness is not only the greatest beauty of a woman, it is also the greatest guard of her morality. Women who are not bashful are unfaithful, those who are unfaithful can be sincere to none, and when this is so then as a woman there is no purpose to her existence because she cannot contribute as a building block of a family even though this is the very purpose of her existence.

The words لَمْ يَطْمِثْهُنَّ اِنْسٌ قَبْلَهُمْ وَلَا جَآنٌّ are an expression of their virginity and chastity. The comparison with rubies and corals is to bring out their beauty and chastity.

After this, occurs the repetitive verse and its occasion and placement is very evident.

هَلْ جَزَآءُ الْاِحْسَانِ اِلَّا الْاِحْسَانُ ﴿۶۰﴾ فَبِاَيِّ اٰلَآءِ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبٰنِ ﴿۶۱﴾[39]

After mentioning the features of the orchard of the near ones, here at the end, the

37. They shall recline on couches lined with thick brocade, and the fruits of both gardens will hang over their heads. So, which of your Lord's favours would you deny?

38. Therein will be bashful houris whom neither man nor jinn would have touched before. So, which of your Lord's gifts would you deny? Houris like rubies and corals. So, which of your Lord's blessings would you deny?

39. The reward of virtue will after all be virtuous? So, which of your Lord's virtues would you deny?

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addressees are very subtly asked why they are surprised to hear that the Almighty will grant all these favours to His pious people! What else should be the reward of piety and purity except blessings and favours? If the Creator of this universe does not bring forth a day in which the wicked are punished for their sins and the pious are rewarded for their virtue, then this would mean that He does not distinguish between vice and virtue. In fact, what can even be concluded from this is that, God forbid, He likes vice more because after giving the wicked all the resources of life, He has set them free to do whatever they want to and work whatever mischief they desire. A man's intellect and nature can never tolerate such an evil estimation about his Lord. His nature bears witness that the Lord of this universe is very just and merciful. He will punish those who commit sins and greatly reward the pious for their virtues. Since this is something very clearly grounded in human nature and no sensible person in his senses can deny it, it has been stated in a manner which reflects it being an obvious reality. The word اِحْسَان is used for piety as well as for the reward of piety. In this verse, it is used very eloquently in both these meanings.

After this, occurs the repetitive verse: its occasion and placement is that when this reality is certain and all-acknowledged, then the Almighty shall definitely reward a person for each of his pious deeds, so which of His favours will man and jinn deny?

وَمِنْ دُوْنِهِمَا جَنَّتٰنِ ﴿٦٢﴾ فَبِاَيِّ اٰلَآءِ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبٰنِ ﴿٦٣﴾[40]

After a mention of the two orchards, a mention of two more orchards comes up. These two orchards are broadly similar to the previous ones and in some aspects are distinct from one another. The question which arises is: will the same people be worthy of both these types of orchards or will they be different? The correct answer to this question is stated in the next *sūrah*. In it, the believers have been divided into two groups: *aṣḥāb al-maymanah* (companions of the right hand) and *al-sābiqūn* (the foremost) and mentions two separate orchards for the two which are similar to one another in some aspects and dissimilar in some others. Hence, what is more probable is that in this *sūrah* too, the earlier two orchards are meant for the *al-sābiqūn* or the *muqarrabīn* (the near ones). Now with this verse begins the mention of the orchards of the *aṣḥāb al-maymanah.* Obviously, just as there is a difference in the status of the two groups, there is a difference in the orchards of the two groups as well, which discerning minds can appreciate. I will also allude to some of the differences in the coming paragraphs. The words مِنْ دُوْنِهِمَا can be translated as "besides these two" and "in contrast with these two" as well as "lesser than these two."

After this is the repetitive verse which occurs after the mention of each favour. It would mean that the favours will not end with these two orchards; there will be other

40. And besides these, there shall be two other orchards. So, which of your Lord's blessings would you deny?

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orchards as well; so which of the orchards of God will man deny?

مُدْهَآمَّتٰنِ ﴿٦٤﴾ فَبِاَيِّ اٰلَآءِ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبٰنِ ﴿٦٥﴾[41]

Such will be the state of greenness of these orchards that they will appear to be blackish. This is the most gorgeous of colours of a lush orchard. After this, occurs the repetitive verse of which the occasion and placement is very evident.

فِيْهِمَا عَيْنٰنِ نَضَّاخَتٰنِ ﴿٦٦﴾ فَبِاَيِّ اٰلَآءِ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبٰنِ ﴿٦٧﴾[42]

The word نَضَّاخٌ means something which is "forceful and steaming." This is a portrayal of mountain springs. For springs which occur on level ground, the word is تَجْرِيَان used earlier which means that they only flow; however, mountainous springs flow with force and vigour. After this, occurs the repetitive verse and its occasion and placement is very evident.

فِيْهِمَا فَاكِهَةٌ وَّ نَخْلٌ وَّ رُمَّانٌ ﴿٦٨﴾ فَبِاَيِّ اٰلَآءِ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبٰنِ ﴿٦٩﴾[43]

A mention of نَخْلٌ (dates) and رُمَّانٌ (pomegranate) after فَاكِهَةٌ (fruit) is a mention of the specific after the general. Both these are cherished fruits of Arabia. In the mention of earlier orchards, the words were مِنْ كُلِّ فَاكِهَةٍ زَوْجٰنِ ie each of the two orchards will have different fruits. The difference between these two styles needs to be appreciated. After this, occurs the repetitive verse of which the occasion and placement is very evident.

فِيْهِنَّ خَيْرٰتٌ حِسَانٌ ﴿٧٠﴾ فَبِاَيِّ اٰلَآءِ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبٰنِ ﴿٧١﴾ حُوْرٌ مَّقْصُوْرٰتٌ فِي الْخِيَامِ ﴿٧٢﴾ فَبِاَيِّ اٰلَآءِ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبٰنِ ﴿٧٣﴾ لَمْ يَطْمِثْهُنَّ اِنْسٌ قَبْلَهُمْ وَلَا جَآنٌّ ﴿٧٤﴾ فَبِاَيِّ اٰلَآءِ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبٰنِ ﴿٧٥﴾[44]

The expression خَيْرٰتٌ حِسَانٌ means pretty and pious. The expression حُوْرٌ مَّقْصُوْرٰتٌ فِي الْخِيَامِ has a special tinge of Arabic taste in it. Living in tents was something very cherished in Arabia. The tents of the affluent people of Arabia were even more classy than their castles and palaces and here the tents are those found in orchards. It was mentioned that there will be bashful maidens in the earlier two orchards and they were compared

41. Both will be greenish black. So, which of your Lord's mercies would you deny?

42. A gushing fountain shall flow in each. So, which of your Lord's mercies would you deny?

43. Each will have fruits, dates and pomegranates. So, which of your Lord's favours would you deny?

44. In each there shall be houris, noble and gorgeous. So, which of your Lord's blessings would you deny? Houris, living in tents. So, which of your Lord's graces would you deny? Whom neither man nor jinn will have touched before. So, which of your Lord's blessings would you deny?

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with corals and rubies. The readers should keep in mind the difference in qualities of the maidens in both sets of the two orchards. After every feature of the maidens, occurs the repetitive verse of which the occasion and placement is very evident.

مُتَّكِـِٕيْنَ عَلٰى رَفْرَفٍ خُضْرٍ وَّ عَبْقَرِيٍّ حِسَانٍ ﴿۷۶﴾ فَبِاَيِّ اٰلَآءِ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبٰنِ ﴿۷۷﴾[45]

The people of these orchards will be reclining on large cushions on green sheets and beautiful rare carpets. The word عَبْقَرِيٌّ is used for rare and expensive things and it can refer to various things keeping in view the context and occasion. Keeping in view this context and occasion, in my opinion, it qualifies carpets. After this, occurs the repetitive verse of which the occasion and placement is very evident.

تَبٰرَكَ اسْمُ رَبِّكَ ذِى الْجَلٰلِ وَ الْاِكْرَامِ ﴿۷۸﴾[46]

Just as earlier on when after mentioning arguments to substantiate reward and punishment, it was said: وَّيَبْقٰى وَجْهُ رَبِّكَ ذُو الْجَلٰلِ وَالْاِكْرَامِ ﴿۲۷﴾ كُلُّ مَنْ عَلَيْهَا فَانٍ ﴿۲۶﴾, in a similar manner, after elaborating upon some other details of reward and punishment, the same verse is repeated here. The purpose of this repetition is that since blessed is the Lord of the Prophet – the Lord of Majesty and Glory, hence all these favours and blessings will necessarily manifest themselves. Foolish are the people who think that the Almighty after creating this world has no concern with its good and evil. Just as in the earlier verse, the word وَجْهُ (face) was used to signify the being of God, in this verse the word اسْمُ (name) is used for this purpose. The name signifies the entity it stands for.

If the features of the orchards mentioned in the previous verses are deliberated upon, it will become evident that the favours pointed out in the orchards mentioned earlier reflect more the taste of the non-Arabs, while those mentioned later reflect more the taste of the Arabs. Though these favours are stated in the form of simile, their real form is known to God alone. The purpose of this mention is that this comparison to some extent brings a broad picture of these favours before us.

I am grateful to God that today on the 24th of Ramaḍān al-Mubārak 1397 AH, I am able to complete the exegesis of this *sūrah*. فَالْحَمْدُ لِلّٰهِ عَلٰى اِحْسَانِهٖ (gratitude be to God for His favours).

Lahore,
10th September 1977 AD
24th Ramaḍān al-Mubārak 1397 AH

———————

45. They shall recline on green sheet cloths and splendid carpets. So, which of your Lord's favours would you deny?

46. Blessed is the name of your Lord, the Lord of majesty and glory!

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Tadabbur i Qur’ān

Sūrah al-Wāqi‘ah (56)

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Sūrah al-Wāqi‘ah

Central Theme and Relationship with the Previous *Sūrahs*

This is the seventh *sūrah* of this group and on it ends its Makkan *sūrahs*. It summarizes the entire discussion regarding reward and punishment mentioned from Sūrah Qāf till Sūrah al-Raḥmān. In these previous *sūrahs*, all the details on this topic have been stated in the light of arguments based on human intellect and human nature as well as on the world within a person and that outside him. In this *sūrah*, instead of explaining these arguments, the Quraysh have been informed of the real result: the Day of Judgement is an indubitable event and there is not the slightest uncertainty in it. They shall necessarily encounter a world in which the values and standards of respect and humiliation will be entirely different from what they are witnessing in this world. In the coming world, respect and success shall be reserved for those who had adhered to faith and righteous deeds. They will attain the positions of the (*muqarrabīn*) favoured ones and the *aṣḥāb al-yamīn* (companions of the right hand). All the successes of Paradise shall be reserved for him. As for those who regarded this world to be everything and were infatuated with it, they will be regarded among the *aṣḥāb al-shimāl* (companions of the left hand) and shall have to face the eternal punishment of Hell.

Analysis of the Discourse

Verses (1-10): The *sūrah* begins with the assertion that the Day of Judgement is certain to come. There is no doubt about its arrival. The Day shall evaluate a person according to his faith and deeds; it shall upgrade many a people and downgrade many. As a result of this assessment, people shall be divided into three categories on that day: the *aṣḥāb al-yamīn*, the *aṣḥāb al-shimāl* and the *sābiqūn al-awwalūn*.

Verses (11-26): Those nearest to the Almighty will be the *sābiqūn al-awwalūn*. The details of the gifts and favours of their Lord which they shall receive in Paradise are recounted together with the qualities of the *sābiqūn al-awwalūn* which actually entitled them to be regarded among this group.

Verses (27-40): The second place shall be occupied by the *aṣḥāb al-yamīn*. A delineation is made of the bounties and rewards which they shall be blessed with in Paradise and their personal lofty character which made them worthy of being regarded among this group.

Verses (41-48): The fate of the *aṣḥāb al-shimāl* is depicted and a reference is made to a few of their grave sins which led them to this punishment.

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Verses (49-74): The arrogant among the Quraysh are addressed and warned that they shall end up with the same fate as that of the *aṣḥāb al-shimāl* if they persist in deviating from the truth and in denying the Prophet (sws). In this regard, a reference is made to certain self-evident arguments which bear evidence to the Day of Reward and Punishment. Such is the nature of these arguments that only the stubborn can deny them.

Verses (75-96): An indication is made about the exalted status of the Qur'ān and the fact that it is above and beyond the reach of Satan and his agents. The Quraysh are again cautioned not to turn a deaf ear to this sublime message and invite their doom. The fate about which this Book is informing them is a reality. Fortunate are they who will today strive to attain a place among the *aṣḥāb al-yamīn* and the *sābiqūn al-awwalūn*; otherwise, they should remember that those who will not do so shall end up among the *aṣḥāb al-shimāl* and shall face a terrible fate.

Section I (Verses 1-56)

بِسۡمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحۡمٰنِ الرَّحِيۡمِ

اِذَا وَقَعَتِ الۡوَاقِعَةُ ۙ﴿۱﴾ لَيۡسَ لِوَقۡعَتِهَا كَاذِبَةٌ ۘ﴿۲﴾ خَافِضَةٌ رَّافِعَةٌ ۙ﴿۳﴾ اِذَا رُجَّتِ الۡاَرۡضُ رَجًّا ۙ﴿۴﴾ وَّ بُسَّتِ الۡجِبَالُ
بَسًّا ۙ﴿۵﴾ فَكَانَتۡ هَبَآءً مُّنۡۢبَثًّا ۙ﴿۶﴾ وَّكُنۡتُمۡ اَزۡوَاجًا ثَلٰثَةً ۘ﴿۷﴾ فَاَصۡحٰبُ الۡمَيۡمَنَةِ ۙ مَاۤ اَصۡحٰبُ الۡمَيۡمَنَةِ ۙ﴿۸﴾ وَ اَصۡحٰبُ
الۡمَشۡئَمَةِ ۙ مَاۤ اَصۡحٰبُ الۡمَشۡئَمَةِ ۙ﴿۹﴾ وَالسّٰبِقُوۡنَ السّٰبِقُوۡنَ ۙ﴿۱۰﴾ اُولٰٓئِكَ الۡمُقَرَّبُوۡنَ ۚ﴿۱۱﴾ فِىۡ جَنّٰتِ النَّعِيۡمِ ؕ﴿۱۲﴾ ثُلَّةٌ مِّنَ الۡاَوَّلِيۡنَ
﴿۱۳﴾ وَقَلِيۡلٌ مِّنَ الۡاٰخِرِيۡنَ ؕ﴿۱۴﴾ عَلٰى سُرُرٍ مَّوۡضُوۡنَةٍ ۙ﴿۱۵﴾ مُّتَّكِـِٕيۡنَ عَلَيۡهَا مُتَقٰبِلِيۡنَ ؕ﴿۱۶﴾ يَطُوۡفُ عَلَيۡهِمۡ وِلۡدَانٌ مُّخَلَّدُوۡنَ
﴿۱۷﴾ بِاَكۡوَابٍ وَّاَبَارِيۡقَ ۙ وَكَاۡسٍ مِّنۡ مَّعِيۡنٍ ۙ﴿۱۸﴾ لَّا يُصَدَّعُوۡنَ عَنۡهَا وَلَا يُنۡزِفُوۡنَ ۙ﴿۱۹﴾ وَفَاكِهَةٍ مِّمَّا يَتَخَيَّرُوۡنَ ۙ﴿۲۰﴾ وَلَحۡمِ طَيۡرٍ
مِّمَّا يَشۡتَهُوۡنَ ؕ﴿۲۱﴾ وَحُوۡرٌ عِيۡنٌ ۙ﴿۲۲﴾ كَاَمۡثَالِ اللُّؤۡلُؤِ الۡمَكۡنُوۡنِ ۚ﴿۲۳﴾ جَزَآءً بِمَا كَانُوۡا يَعۡمَلُوۡنَ ؕ﴿۲۴﴾ لَا يَسۡمَعُوۡنَ فِيۡهَا لَغۡوًا وَّلَا
تَاۡثِيۡمًا ۙ﴿۲۵﴾ اِلَّا قِيۡلًا سَلٰمًا سَلٰمًا ﴿۲۶﴾ وَاَصۡحٰبُ الۡيَمِيۡنِ ۙ مَاۤ اَصۡحٰبُ الۡيَمِيۡنِ ۙ﴿۲۷﴾ فِىۡ سِدۡرٍ مَّخۡضُوۡدٍ ۙ﴿۲۸﴾ وَّ طَلۡحٍ مَّنۡضُوۡدٍ
﴿۲۹﴾ وَّظِلٍّ مَّمۡدُوۡدٍ ۙ﴿۳۰﴾ وَّمَآءٍ مَّسۡكُوۡبٍ ۙ﴿۳۱﴾ وَّ فَاكِهَةٍ كَثِيۡرَةٍ ۙ﴿۳۲﴾ لَّا مَقۡطُوۡعَةٍ وَّلَا مَمۡنُوۡعَةٍ ۙ﴿۳۳﴾ وَّ فُرُشٍ مَّرۡفُوۡعَةٍ ؕ﴿۳۴﴾
اِنَّاۤ اَنۡشَاۡنٰهُنَّ اِنۡشَآءً ۙ﴿۳۵﴾ فَجَعَلۡنٰهُنَّ اَبۡكَارًا ۙ﴿۳۶﴾ عُرُبًا اَتۡرَابًا ۙ﴿۳۷﴾ لِّاَصۡحٰبِ الۡيَمِيۡنِ ؕ﴿۳۸﴾ ثُلَّةٌ مِّنَ الۡاَوَّلِيۡنَ ۙ﴿۳۹﴾ وَثُلَّةٌ
مِّنَ الۡاٰخِرِيۡنَ ؕ﴿۴۰﴾ وَاَصۡحٰبُ الشِّمَالِ ۙ مَاۤ اَصۡحٰبُ الشِّمَالِ ۙ﴿۴۱﴾ فِىۡ سَمُوۡمٍ وَّ حَمِيۡمٍ ۙ﴿۴۲﴾ وَّظِلٍّ مِّنۡ يَّحۡمُوۡمٍ ۙ﴿۴۳﴾ لَّا بَارِدٍ وَّ
لَا كَرِيۡمٍ ؕ﴿۴۴﴾ اِنَّهُمۡ كَانُوۡا قَبۡلَ ذٰلِكَ مُتۡرَفِيۡنَ ۚ﴿۴۵﴾ وَكَانُوۡا يُصِرُّوۡنَ عَلَى الۡحِنۡثِ الۡعَظِيۡمِ ۚ﴿۴۶﴾ وَكَانُوۡا يَقُوۡلُوۡنَ ۙ اَئِذَا مِتۡنَا وَ
كُنَّا تُرَابًا وَّ عِظَامًا ءَاِنَّا لَمَبۡعُوۡثُوۡنَ ۙ﴿۴۷﴾ اَوَ اٰبَآؤُنَا الۡاَوَّلُوۡنَ ؕ﴿۴۸﴾ قُلۡ اِنَّ الۡاَوَّلِيۡنَ وَ الۡاٰخِرِيۡنَ ۙ﴿۴۹﴾ لَمَجۡمُوۡعُوۡنَ ۙ اِلٰى مِيۡقَاتِ
يَوۡمٍ مَّعۡلُوۡمٍ ؕ﴿۵۰﴾ ثُمَّ اِنَّكُمۡ اَيُّهَا الضَّآلُّوۡنَ الۡمُكَذِّبُوۡنَ ۙ﴿۵۱﴾ لَاٰكِلُوۡنَ مِنۡ شَجَرٍ مِّنۡ زَقُّوۡمٍ ۙ﴿۵۲﴾ فَمَالِـُٔوۡنَ مِنۡهَا الۡبُطُوۡنَ ۚ﴿۵۳﴾

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فَشٰرِبُوْنَ عَلَيْهِ مِنَ الْحَمِيْمِ ﴿٥٤﴾ فَشٰرِبُوْنَ شُرْبَ الْهِيْمِ ﴿٥٥﴾ هٰذَا نُزُلُهُمْ يَوْمَ الدِّيْنِ ﴿٥٦﴾

Remember when that which is to happen shall happen. There is no semblance of falsity in its happening. It is one which elevates and one which relegates; when the earth will be totally rattled, and the mountains while being crushed to pieces will become dispersed dust. And you shall be divided into three groups. (1-7)

One group shall be of the companions of the right hand; so what can be spoken of the companions of the right hand! Another group shall be of the companions of the left hand; so what shall happen to the companions of the left hand! As for the foremost, they shall be the foremost. They shall be the favoured ones in gardens of delight: most among them will be from the early generations but only a few from the later ones. They shall recline on jewelled couches face to face. Immortal youths shall wait on them with bowls and ewers and cups of purest wine that will neither cause headaches nor take away their sanity; and fruits of their own choice and flesh of the birds they relish. And for them shall be large-eyed houris like protected pearls: a reward for their deeds. There they shall hear no absurd talk, no sinful speech. Only greetings and congratulations everywhere. (8-26)

And as for the companions of the right hand – what can be spoken of the companions of the right hand! among thornless lote-trees and clusters of bananas and vast shades; amidst gushing waters and abundant fruits, never-ending, unforbidden; and bedding raised high. And for them shall be wives whom We would have created in a unique manner; thus We shall make them remain virgins, enchanting and of the same age. These favours shall be for the companions of the right hand. Among them will be many from later generations and also many from the early ones. (27-40)

As for the companions of the left hand! What a fate shall befall them! They shall be amidst scorching winds and seething water and in the shade of smoke which will neither be cool nor with any other benefit. Before this, they lived in comfort and persisted in the greatest sin and would say: "Would that when we die and turn to dust and bones, shall we be raised to life again? And our forefathers, too?" (41-48)

Tell them: "Those of old and those of the present age shall all be brought together till the prescribed time of an appointed day. Then you people! O those who have been led astray and who have denied the truth! You shall eat from the tree of *zaqqūm* and fill your bellies with it. Then upon this you shall drink scalding water like a thirsty camel. This shall be their first feast on the Day of Reckoning." (49-56)

Explanation

اِذَا وَقَعَتِ الْوَاقِعَةُ ﴿١﴾ لَيْسَ لِوَقْعَتِهَا كَاذِبَةٌ ﴿٢﴾[1]

The word الْوَاقِعَةُ refers to the Day of Judgement. Alluding to it by this word

1. Remember when that which is to happen shall happen. There is no semblance of falsity in its happening.

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expresses its certainty. The arguments which substantiate the advent of this Day have been mentioned in detail in the previous *sūrahs* of this group. Moreover, the doubts and questions raised by the disbelievers regarding the possibility and happening of this Day have also been answered one by one. It is now said that these people should remember that when that which is to happen shall happen in spite of their doubts and objections, and that they shall not be able to run away from it in any way.

The word كَاذِبَةٌ in لَيْسَ لِوَقْعَتِهَا كَاذِبَةٌ is a verbal noun like عَاقِبَةٌ and عَافِيَةٌ. It means that there is absolutely no doubt in its happening. If they suspiciously think that they are being falsely threatened about a catastrophe, let it be known to them that there is not a bit of falsehood in it. It is a certain event which they are bound to face; so if they want to meet a congenial fate, they must get ready to face it.

خَافِضَةٌ رَّافِعَةٌ ۝٣[2]

The implication of the verse is that these people should not remain under the misconception that the high position which they have today will always remain with them and those whom they are considering to be lowly and underprivileged will always remain so. The fact of the matter is that when that which is to happen comes, these heavens and the earth will appear with new laws. The standards of respect and honour will totally change. On that day, the believers will be blessed with all honour and status. People who have with them the investment and capital of faith will be elevated, and those who are deprived of this treasure will be deprived and humiliated. Here this fate is stated in a very succinct way. Coming up in verse seven is the detail of this elevation and relegation. It will become evident from it the standard according to which this will take place.

اِذَا رُجَّتِ الْاَرْضُ رَجًّا ۝٤ وَّبُسَّتِ الْجِبَالُ بَسًّا ۝٥ فَكَانَتْ هَبَآءً مُّنْۢبَثًّا ۝٦[3]

These verses portray the Day of Judgement: on that day, the earth shall be jolted and shaken, and the towering mountains which these naïve people regard to be eternal and unshakable will disperse like dust. It is evident from this that all the high structures in this earth will be levelled to the ground. Such an earthquake will ensue that it will cause the earth to severely shake and tremble and raze to the ground all the structures, edifices and castles on it. So much so, these gigantic mountains will become dust that will fly about. This subject is mentioned in Sūrah al-Ḥāqqah thus:

وَّحُمِلَتِ الْاَرْضُ وَالْجِبَالُ فَدُكَّتَا دَكَّةً وَّاحِدَةً. فَيَوْمَئِذٍ وَّقَعَتِ الْوَاقِعَةُ. (٦٩: ١٤-١٥)

2. It is one which elevates and one which relegates.

3. When the earth will be totally rattled, and the mountains while being crushed to pieces will become dispersed dust.

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And the earth and the mountains shall be shattered to pieces with one crash. So on that day will happen which is to happen. (69:14-15)

وَّكُنْتُمْ اَزْوَاجًا ثَلٰثَةً ۝ فَاَصْحٰبُ الْمَيْمَنَةِ ۙ مَآ اَصْحٰبُ الْمَيْمَنَةِ ۝ وَاَصْحٰبُ الْمَشْئَمَةِ ۙ مَآ اَصْحٰبُ الْمَشْئَمَةِ ۝ وَالسّٰبِقُوْنَ السّٰبِقُوْنَ ۝ 4

Mentioned in this verse are the details of the elevation and relegation referred to in verse three: on that day, mankind will be divided into three groups. One group will be of the companions of the right hand, another of the companions of the left hand and the third of people who were the foremost (*sābiqūn*).

The Qur'ān itself has clarified that by the companions of the right hand, those people are implied who will receive their account in their right hands. Thus it is mentioned in Sūrah al-Ḥāqqah: فَاَمَّا مَنْ اُوْتِيَ كِتٰبَهٗ بِيَمِيْنِهٖ ۙ فَيَقُوْلُ هَآؤُمُ اقْرَءُوْا كِتٰبِيَهْ. اِنِّيْ ظَنَنْتُ اَنِّيْ مُلٰقٍ حِسَابِيَهْ (٦٩:١٩-٢٠) (Then he who is given his account in his right hand will say: "Read my account. I always thought that I shall have to face my reckoning."(6919-20))

The companions of the left hand refer to people whose accounts will be handed over to them in their left hands. In Sūrah al-Ḥāqqah, they are mentioned in the following words:

وَاَمَّا مَنْ اُوْتِيَ كِتٰبَهٗ بِشِمَالِهٖ ۙ فَيَقُوْلُ يٰلَيْتَنِيْ لَمْ اُوْتَ كِتٰبِيَهْ. وَلَمْ اَدْرِ مَا حِسَابِيَهْ. يٰلَيْتَهَا كَانَتِ الْقَاضِيَةَ. مَآ اَغْنٰى عَنِّيْ مَالِيَهْ. هَلَكَ عَنِّيْ سُلْطٰنِيَهْ. (٦٩:٢٥-٢٩)

And he who is given his record in his left hand will say: "Would that I were not given my record or I were not aware of my account. Would that death were final. Of what use has been my wealth to me? I am robbed of all my authority." (69:25-29))

The word "the foremost" (*sābiqūn*) refers to people who were foremost in accepting the calls of the true religion and were blessed with the opportunity of serving it through their persons and wealth when there were few to serve it and mustering courage to help it was like putting oneself into danger. Consequently, in Sūrah al-Ḥadīd, which is the counterpart of this *sūrah*, this reality is discussed thus: لَا يَسْتَوِيْ مِنْكُمْ مَّنْ اَنْفَقَ مِنْ قَبْلِ الْفَتْحِ وَقٰتَلَ ۭ اُولٰۗىِٕكَ اَعْظَمُ دَرَجَةً مِّنَ الَّذِيْنَ اَنْفَقُوْا مِنْۢ بَعْدُ وَقٰتَلُوْا ۭ وَكُلًّا وَّعَدَ اللّٰهُ الْحُسْنٰى. (٥٧:١٠) (And those of you who will spend and wage war before the conquest of Makkah, and those who will spend and wage war afterwards will not be equal. These people will have a

4. And you shall be divided into three groups. One group shall be of the companions of the right hand; so what can be spoken of the companions of the right hand! Another group shall be of the companions of the left hand; so what shall happen to the companions of the left hand! As for the foremost, they shall be the foremost.

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greater status than those who spend and wage war afterwards. Yet God has promised each a good reward. (57:10))

The interrogative found in مَآ اَصْحٰبُ الْيَمِيْنَةِ can express majesty and grandeur and can also express hate and disgust. Here is it used in the former connotation. The implication is that one cannot even begin to imagine the majesty and grandeur, eternal bliss and affluence and well-being of the companions of the right hand; how can one describe them and who can assess their extent? This style is adopted when the situation is such that the words of the incident portrayed are beyond words and imagination. There are many examples of this in the Qur'ān. In our language too, this style is common.

This same style found in وَاَصْحٰبُ الْمَشْئَمَةِ is to express the opposite: hate and disgust. In other words, just as one cannot imagine the good fortune of the companions of the right hand, in a similar way, one cannot imagine the misfortune, humiliation and evil fate of the companions of the left hand; words are powerless to portray this. Only they will know who will face this situation.

In وَالسّٰبِقُوْنَ السّٰبِقُوْنَ the second السّٰبِقُوْنَ is in the place of the enunciative (*khabar*) and the brevity found in it has great eloquence in it. The implication is that one cannot imagine or describe the exalted position of the السّٰبِقُوْنَ (the foremost); they are in fact the السّٰبِقُوْنَ (the foremost); when they are the foremost, who can reach their status? They shall necessarily reach the pinnacle of human attributes and who can imagine this pinnacle in this world?

It is evident from these details that the view of those who think that these terms signify the arrangement of people who will stand before God is not correct. In the first place, in the assembly of God, the concept of right and left, front and back is a meaningless one. Even if this concept is accepted, then it is an acknowledged fact that the companions of the left hand will have no place in this gathering neither on the left nor at the back; their abode in fact shall be Hell as is evident from the succeeding verses of this *sūrah* and from other places of the Qur'ān.

The second thing which is evident is that the companions of the right hand do not refer to common Muslims, as understood by some people; they refer to people whose accounts will be handed over in their right hands to honour them, and they will be very happy and joyous on their achievements. There also exist among common Muslims people about whom one would have to be too generous to think that their accounts will be handed over to them in their right hands and will be worthy of gleefully exclaiming: هَآؤُمُ اقْرَءُوْا كِتٰبِيَهْ. (۱۹:٦۹) (read my account, (69:19)). As far as the question is concerned as to what the difference between the companions of the right hand and the foremost (*sābiqūn*) is, I have already alluded to it earlier and more explanation is coming up.

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أُولَٰئِكَ الْمُقَرَّبُونَ ﴿١١﴾ فِي جَنَّاتِ النَّعِيمِ ﴿١٢﴾ ثُلَّةٌ مِّنَ الْأَوَّلِينَ ﴿١٣﴾ وَقَلِيلٌ مِّنَ الْآخِرِينَ ﴿١٤﴾ [5]

Since it was these *sābiqūn* who were the leaders and pioneers of the caravan, their reward is mentioned the foremost: they shall be nearest to God; however, they shall reside in the Paradise of favours (جَنّٰتِ النَّعِيمِ) which has no concept of any court of God in it. It is evident from this that there will be Paradises for the *sābiqūn* in accordance with their various grades and positions where they will reside. Some more details of their Paradise are coming up in the succeeding verses.

The verses ثُلَّةٌ مِّنَ الْأَوَّلِينَ ﴿١٣﴾ وَقَلِيلٌ مِّنَ الْآخِرِينَ ﴿١٤﴾ tell us about the fortunate who will be counted among the *sābiqūn*: most of them will be from the earlier generations and a few from the later ones. The word ثُلَّةٌ means "group" or "party"; however, since the word قَلِيلٌ (less) is used in contrast to it, it should be construed to mean a large group.

The words اَوَّلِيْنَ and اٰخِرِيْنَ refer to the early and later part of this *ummah*.

Earlier, I have alluded to a verse of Sūrah al-Ḥadīd evident from which is that the status before God of those who spent in the way of God and waged *jihād* for this cause will be greater than those who were fortunate enough to be able to do after the conquest – though befitting is the reward of God for both. In other words, though the later generations in their collective capacity will not be able to reach the same status as the earlier ones yet the way to enter the ranks of companions of the right hand is open for them if they are sincere and practicing.

The words ثُلَّةٌ مِّنَ الْأَوَّلِينَ also show that not all the earlier generations will end up among the *muqarrabīn* (favoured ones of God); only their majority will be able to do so. The reason for this is that this rank does not relate only to any specific period; the real factor in it is the personality traits and deeds. It is possible that a person may be the foremost in embracing faith, however, he is not able to win the rank of the *muqarrabīn* on the basis of his courage, sacrifices and strength of faith.

Similarly, the words وَقَلِيلٌ مِّنَ الْآخِرِينَ show that there will be people among the later generations who will be fortunate enough to be able to secure a place among the *sābiqūn*. Obviously, these will be people who would adhere to the truth even in times of trial and continue to call people towards the truth and however adverse the circumstances may be and however few they may be, they will never lose strength. Such a group of people will continue to grace this *ummah* in every period of time, as is evident from some Ḥadīth narratives. Though these people will be among the later period, yet they will be the foremost as far as their services are concerned. The Prophet Jesus (sws) has alluded to this reality in the following words: "Many of those who come later will be in front."

Here it may be kept in mind that though these verses relate to this *ummah*; however,

5. They shall be the favoured ones in gardens of delight: most among them will be from the early generations but only a few from the later ones.

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in principle they can be applied to the followers of every prophet and messenger. Consequently, at another place this is stated as a general principle thus: ثُمَّ اَوۡرَثۡنَا الۡكِتٰبَ الَّذِيۡنَ اصۡطَفَيۡنَا مِنۡ عِبَادِنَا ۚ فَمِنۡهُمۡ ظَالِمٌ لِّنَفۡسِهٖ ۚ وَمِنۡهُمۡ مُّقۡتَصِدٌ ۚ وَمِنۡهُمۡ سَابِقٌۢ بِالۡخَيۡرٰتِ بِاِذۡنِ اللّٰهِ ؕ ذٰلِكَ هُوَ الۡفَضۡلُ الۡكَبِيۡرُ. (۳۲:۳۵) (We then bestowed the Book on those of Our servants whom We have chosen. Some sin against their souls, some follow a middle course, and some, by God's leave, vie with each other in charitable works: this is the supreme virtue. (35:32))

A deliberation on the words of this verse will show that only the words are different: it too mentions the same three groups which are referred to in this very *sūrah*: the companions of the right hand, the companions of the left hand and the *sābiqūn*.

عَلٰى سُرُرٍ مَّوۡضُوۡنَةٍ ۙ﴿۱۵﴾ مُّتَّكِـِٕيۡنَ عَلَيۡهَا مُتَقٰبِلِيۡنَ ﴿۱۶﴾ يَطُوۡفُ عَلَيۡهِمۡ وِلۡدَانٌ مُّخَلَّدُوۡنَ ۙ﴿۱۷﴾ بِاَكۡوَابٍ وَّاَبَارِيۡقَ ۙ وَكَاۡسٍ مِّنۡ مَّعِيۡنٍ ۙ﴿۱۸﴾ لَّا يُصَدَّعُوۡنَ عَنۡهَا وَلَا يُنۡزِفُوۡنَ ۙ﴿۱۹﴾ وَفَاكِهَةٍ مِّمَّا يَتَخَيَّرُوۡنَ ۙ﴿۲۰﴾ وَلَحۡمِ طَيۡرٍ مِّمَّا يَشۡتَهُوۡنَ ؕ﴿۲۱﴾ وَحُوۡرٌ عِيۡنٌ ۙ﴿۲۲﴾ كَاَمۡثَالِ اللُّؤۡلُؤِ الۡمَكۡنُوۡنِ ۚ﴿۲۳﴾[6]

These are the details of the Paradise of the *muqarrabīn*. First, their sitting place and the manner of their reclining in it is portrayed: they will sit on jewelled and gold plated thrones facing one another. Some people have interpreted the word مَوۡضُوۡنَةٍ in a different sense. However, in my opinion, its true meaning is "jeweled.". The ancient kings of Persia would grace their thrones which were gold plated and decked with various jewels like pearls and other expensive stones.

The word مُتَّكِـِٕيۡنَ automatically encompasses the meaning of "cushions" because cushions on thrones are necessary to recline against, and since ancient times these were the essential supplements to the royal throne.

Sitting while facing one another indicates that their hearts will not have any envy, spite or ill-feeling for one another. People whose hearts have malice for one another sit facing away from each other. The Qur'ān, however, at other places, has specified that the hearts of the dwellers of Paradise will be absolutely free from spite and jealousy. For this reason, they will sit face to face the way sincere and affectionate relatives and friends do so.

Consider next the following verses:

يَطُوۡفُ عَلَيۡهِمۡ وِلۡدَانٌ مُّخَلَّدُوۡنَ ۙ﴿۱۷﴾ بِاَكۡوَابٍ وَّاَبَارِيۡقَ ۙ وَكَاۡسٍ مِّنۡ مَّعِيۡنٍ ۙ﴿۱۸﴾ لَّا يُصَدَّعُوۡنَ عَنۡهَا وَلَا يُنۡزِفُوۡنَ ۙ﴿۱۹﴾ وَفَاكِهَةٍ مِّمَّا يَتَخَيَّرُوۡنَ ۙ﴿۲۰﴾ وَلَحۡمِ طَيۡرٍ مِّمَّا يَشۡتَهُوۡنَ ؕ﴿۲۱﴾

They refer to the items which will be presented to satisfy their taste-buds: vigilant

6. They shall recline on jewelled couches face to face. Immortal youths shall wait on them with bowls and ewers and cups of purest wine that will neither cause headaches nor take away their sanity; and fruits of their own choice and flesh of the birds they relish. And for them shall be large-eyed houris like protected pearls:

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youths will constantly wait upon them with ewers and cups of the purest wine.

The word مُخَلَّدُوْنَ shows that these youths will forever remain of the same age. They will be eternal waiters. To serve gatherings, youth of a certain age are regarded to be the most appropriate, well-mannered, enthusiastic and alert. For this reason, the Almighty will always keep them of the same age. Since an attendant who is aware of the temperament of his master can serve him best, for this reason, the youth deputed to people will always remain with them to serve them. Some people are of the opinion that the children of the disbelievers who die in their youth will be put to this service of the dwellers of Paradise by the Almighty. Though there is nothing in the Qur'ān which points to this, yet there is nothing which is against this either. This is because there is no reason for the children of the disbelievers to go to Hell. Also, it is not essential that they are put to this service only. Vast is God's Paradise and He is very gracious. He can even grant them a place in Paradise because of their innocence.

The word اَكْوَابٌ is the plural of كُوْبٌ. كُوْبٌ and cup are the same. The word اَبَارِيْقَ is the plural of اِبْرِيْقٌ which appears to be an arabacized version of the Persian word آب ریز. It is an established fact that the Arabs have borrowed many cultural words from non-Arabs. The word كَاْسٌ is used both for the content and the container ie. wine and wine-cups. The word مَعِيْنٍ has also been used for pure water and fountain of pure water in the Qur'ān and also for the fountain of pure wine. Here, it is used in this last meaning.

The words لَّا يُصَدَّعُوْنَ عَنْهَا وَلَا يُنْزِفُوْنَ say that the wine will be such that its real benefit of giving bliss and delight will be there, yet it will be devoid of all harmful effects which plague the wines of this world. The wine of this world inflicts a person with inebriation, headaches and tiredness; however, the wine of Paradise will be free from these evil effects. The greatest evil of this world's wine is that it causes a person to lose his senses – which are the greatest asset of a person. A moment of deprivation of the senses can lead him to several severe hazards. The wine of Paradise will not be afflicted with this poison. The expression نزف الجب means ذهب عقله (a person lost his senses).

Together with wine, the verses (٢١-٢٢) وَفَاكِهَةٍ مِّمَّا يَتَخَيَّرُوْنَ. وَلَحْمِ طَيْرٍ مِّمَّا يَشْتَهُوْنَ mention other delicacies which will be present to please their taste buds. The young waiters will present to them fruits of their choice and meat of the birds they relish. Among edibles, these are the two things mentioned at the top. It is as if their mention was enough to mention all others. The qualifying words يَتَخَيَّرُوْنَ and يَشْتَهُوْنَ show that the choice and selection of each person will be given full consideration. They will be presented fruits they will choose and the meat of those birds will be given to them which they desire.

All the luxuries and indulgence of life is incomplete without one's wife who the Almighty has made a means of comfort and assurance for a person. Just as a person needs such a partner and feels lonely without her, similarly, in Paradise too without her, all its luxury is incomplete. Thus, the Almighty will bless him with large-eyed houris who would be pure and untouched like hidden pearls. These two features of theirs encompass all the outer and inner aspects of their beauty.

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جَزَآءًۢ بِمَا كَانُوْا يَعْمَلُوْنَ ﴿٢٤﴾[7]

This is the real success achieved by the self-less *muqarrabīn.* The verse says that whatever they will be given, they will be given in return for their deeds. They will be entitled to it and the gracious Lord will definitely give them what they earned. Here one needs to keep in consideration one aspect of human nature: the value of a thing which a person has earned as a right is much greater than what he may get accidentally even if the latter is greater in amount.

لَا يَسْمَعُوْنَ فِيْهَا لَغْوًا وَّلَا تَاْثِيْمًا ﴿٢٥﴾ اِلَّا قِيْلًا سَلٰمًا سَلٰمًا ﴿٢٦﴾[8]

These verses point at the pure and unadulterated bliss and ecstasy of the *muqarrabīn*: whatever nonsensical and frivolous talks of their enemies and criticizers they had to listen to ended with the previous world and so did the harms and losses they had to bear. In Paradise, they will neither hear any nonsensical talk nor any sinful conversation. Peace and mercy will embrace them from all sides. This will be from God, the angels and from their own companions as well. Morning and evening, they will be engulfed in these cries.

وَاَصْحٰبُ الْيَمِيْنِ ۙ مَآ اَصْحٰبُ الْيَمِيْنِ ﴿٢٧﴾[9]

From here begins the description of the Paradise given to the companions of the right hand. Earlier, they were referred to by the words *aṣḥāb al-maymanah* which shows that the expression *aṣḥāb al-yamīn* and *aṣḥāb al-maymanah* have the same meaning in the Qur'ān: they are the people whose accounts will be handed over in their right hands.

فِيْ سِدْرٍ مَّخْضُوْدٍ ﴿٢٨﴾ وَّطَلْحٍ مَّنْضُوْدٍ ﴿٢٩﴾ وَّظِلٍّ مَّمْدُوْدٍ ﴿٣٠﴾ وَّمَآءٍ مَّسْكُوْبٍ ﴿٣١﴾ وَّفَاكِهَةٍ كَثِيْرَةٍ ﴿٣٢﴾ لَّا مَقْطُوْعَةٍ وَّلَا مَمْنُوْعَةٍ ﴿٣٣﴾[10]

These verses mention the fruits of Paradise, its shades and its freshness. The word سِدْرٌ refers to lote-trees. In our areas, lote-trees do not have much significance. Hence, it is possible that the question arises in the mind of some people as to why this fruit is

7. A reward for their deeds they had been doing.

8. There they shall hear no absurd talk, no sinful speech. Only greetings and congratulations everywhere.

9. And as for the companions of the right hand – what can be spoken of the companions of the right hand!

10. Among thornless lote-trees and clusters of bananas and vast shades; amidst gushing waters and abundant fruits, never-ending, unforbidden.

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worthy of being mentioned by the Qur'ān. Here, firstly it needs to be understood that the lote-trees of each area are not the same. In some areas, its fruits are very tasty, sweet-smelling and have brilliant colours. Secondly, these lote-trees are of Paradise; they can only be mentioned in the form of a parable in this world. We have no means to know of their reality. Only those people will be able to know their reality who will be included among the companions of the right hand. It is also evident from the Qur'ān that this tree has special significance in the eyes of the Almighty:

وَلَقَدْ رَاٰهُ نَزْلَةً اُخْرٰى. عِنْدَ سِدْرَةِ الْمُنْتَهٰى. عِنْدَهَا جَنَّةُ الْمَاْوٰى. اِذْ يَغْشَى السِّدْرَةَ مَا يَغْشٰى. مَا زَاغَ الْبَصَرُ وَمَا طَغٰى.

(۵۳:۱۳-۱۷)

And the Prophet saw Gabriel descending another time near the farthest lote-tree – near it is the Garden of Abode – when that lote-tree was covered with what covered it; his eyes did not wander, nor did they turn aside. (53:13-17).

While explaining these verses in the light of indications from the Qur'ān, I had written that this lote-tree is the one which is found at the junction of this world and the next. It was on it that the Prophet (sws) observed the light and divine manifestations mentioned in the majestic words of 53:16-17 quoted above. The initial observations of the Prophet Moses (sws) regarding prophethood as stated in the Torah and the Qur'ān also mention a tree from which he heard the voice of the Almighty and saw light and divine manifestations on it. Though there is no indication in the Qur'ān from which one can gather the type of the tree, yet it is evident from the similarity of the two incidents that that tree too was the lote-tree.

The word مَخْضُوْدٍ which qualifies سِدْرٍ shows that this lote-tree would not be injurious the way lote-trees of this world are: if people want to pluck its fruit, their hands are wounded by its thorns. The lote-trees of Paradise will be thorn-less and will inflict no harm. Whenever the dwellers of Paradise want, they will be able to pluck its fruit. The word خَضَدَ is used to mean to cut the thorns of something which has thorns. Here the purpose is to show that like its fruit the lote-trees themselves will be different than what they are in this world. It may be kept in mind that in this world the better the quality of a lote-tree the lesser the thorns it will have. It is the wild lote-trees who have more thorns. The destruction of the Paradise-like orchard of the people of the Sabā' mentioned in the Qur'ān also portrays the destruction of the lote-trees which became brambles. It is evident from this that its fruit was among their favourites and these trees embellished their orchards. As far as the family of this tree is concerned, it is related to the family of apples.

Consider next the verse: وَطَلْحٍ مَّنْضُوْدٍ. The word طَلْحٌ means "a banana". The word مَنْضُوْدٍ signifies that these bananas will be joined to one another in layers. The beauty of their selection and arrangement will show that the Almighty has made elaborate efforts to

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choose them to gratify the taste-buds of His people.

The verses وَّ مَآءٍ مَّسْكُوْبٍ ﴿٣١﴾ وَّ ظِلٍّ مَّمْدُوْدٍ ﴿٣٠﴾ depict the luxuriance and freshness of the orchard. Because of their sturdiness and lushness, these trees will be so adjacent to one another that sunlight will not be able to pass through them. For this reason, there will be shade every where and the orchard shall be continuously watered so that its splendour does not decrease.

The verses لَّا مَقْطُوْعَةٍ وَّ لَا مَمْنُوْعَةٍ ﴿٣٣﴾ وَّ فَاكِهَةٍ كَثِيْرَةٍ ﴿٣٢﴾ imply that the fruits mentioned earlier are just mentioned as examples. There will be several other fruits and they shall be very different from their counterparts in this world. Here it is essential to pluck the fruits in a certain period of time otherwise they wither away themselves; however, the trees in Paradise will be ever-fruit bearing. Similarly, in this world, there can be a year in which an orchard bears fruit and there can be a year when it does not or bears less fruit. The orchards of Paradise will not be afflicted with this shortcoming. The Almighty will never ever deprive them of fruit.

وَّ فُرُشٍ مَّرْفُوْعَةٍ ﴿٣٤﴾ اِنَّآ اَنْشَاْنٰهُنَّ اِنْشَآءً ﴿٣٥﴾ فَجَعَلْنٰهُنَّ اَبْكَارًا ﴿٣٦﴾ عُرُبًا اَتْرَابًا ﴿٣٧﴾[11]

Mentioned in these verses are their seats and their wives. In the case of the *muqarrabīn* the sequence, one may remember, is different. Some of the reasons for this difference are psychological; however, this is not the opportune time to go into these details.

They shall sit on bedding raised high and for them will be wives whom the Almighty would have raised in a special way. Here a question arises: A pronoun is used for the wives without any antecedent. No doubt that this is so; however, concomitant indication for this is very evident. There is a proverb in Arabic which says: الشیء یذکر بالشیء (one remembers a thing from another); in this case, a mention of wives after a mention of rugs is of similar nature. Because of this association, they are mentioned in the form of a pronoun which carries both the eloquence of brevity in it and also the teaching that women should be mentioned in a hidden manner. One does not need to provide any evidence for the fact that there are instances in the Qur'ān in which thrones and rugs are mentioned with wives. However, just to satisfy the hearts, I am citing some verses below.

The words in Sūrah al-Ṭūr are:

مُتَّكِـِٕيْنَ عَلٰى سُرُرٍ مَّصْفُوْفَةٍ ۚ وَزَوَّجْنٰهُمْ بِحُوْرٍ عِيْنٍ. (٥٢:٢٠)

They will recline on thrones laid out in succession and We will marry them with large eyed houris. (52:20)

11. And bedding raised high. And for them shall be wives whom We would have created in a unique manner; thus We shall make them remain virgins, enchanting and of the same age.

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In the Sūrah Yūnus, it is said:

هُمْ وَاَزْوَاجُهُمْ فِيْ ظِلٰلٍ عَلَى الْاَرَآئِكِ مُتَّكِئُوْنَ. (٣٦:٥٦)

Together with their spouses, they shall recline in shady groves upon thrones. (36:56)

While explaining the nature of these houris, the verse اِنَّآ اَنْشَاْنٰهُنَّ اِنْشَآءً says that the Almighty would have raised them in a special way. Thus the features and attributes of these women will be totally different from those of this world. The virginity, beauty and youth of the women of this world are temporary and mortal. A poet has said:

اگر ماند شبے ماند شبے دیگر نمی ماند

(If it stays, it will stay for one night and not more)

However, the Almighty would have raised the houris of Paradise in a very different manner. Hence, their virginity, beauty and youth will never be lost.

In the verses فَجَعَلْنٰهُنَّ اَبْكَارًا ﴿٣٦﴾ عُرُبًا اَتْرَابًا ﴿٣٧﴾, the ف explains the special manner in which they would be raised: they will always remain virgins. Whenever, their husband will come near them, it will be as if they have come near them for the first time.

The word عُرُبًا is a plural of عُرُوْبٌ. It means "a beloved and beautiful wife." Obviously when their virginity, beauty and youth will never vanish, there will be no reason for their husbands to lose interest in them; on the other hand, these wives will always remain as desired and cherished like a fresh and fragrant flower.

The word اَتْرَابًا is the plural of تِرْبٌ. It means someone who is of the same age; however, people who have a linguistic taste of Arabic know that it is pre-dominantly used for women. Hence, in my opinion, here it means "women who are bosom friends." In Sūrah al-Nabā', the words used are كَوَاعِبَ اَتْرَابًا (the virgins, bosom friends). The implication is that all the houris given to the dwellers of Paradise will be bosom friends and of the same age; for this reason, neither the question of preferring one to the other will arise nor will the emotions of jealousy and envy mutually arise between them. Just as these houris will always remain virgins and young, their husbands too will remain young and graceful.

لِّاَصْحٰبِ الْيَمِيْنِ ﴿٣٨﴾[12]

These words can relate to the previous verse and can also be regarded as an enunuciative (*khabar*) of a suppressed inchoative (*mubtadā'*). In the first case, the meaning will be that these houris raised in a special way with special attributes by the

12. These favours shall be for the companions of the right hand.

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Almighty will be for the companions of the right hand. In the second case, the meaning will be that all these blessings which are mentioned above will be for the companions of the right hand in the Hereafter. I am inclined to the first of these interpretations; however, whichever among the two is adopted, there will be no difference in the purport of these verses; there will just be a subtle difference in the eloquence of the discourse which can be felt by all those who have a flair for the language. For this reason, there is no need to go into the reasons of preferring one to the other.

ثُلَّةٌ مِّنَ الْاَوَّلِيْنَ ۝٣٩ وَثُلَّةٌ مِّنَ الْاٰخِرِيْنَ ۝٤٠[13]

Earlier it was mentioned that a greater proportion of the *sābiqūn* will belong to the earlier generations; very few from the later generations would be fortunate enough to be regarded among them. Here, in these verses, the Qur'ān says that there will be one group from both the earlier and later generations. It is evident from this that till the Day of Judgement several people will continue to be categorized among them, and on that Day they will be raised in the form of one group.

وَاَصْحٰبُ الشِّمَالِ ۙ مَآ اَصْحٰبُ الشِّمَالِ ۝٤١ فِيْ سَمُوْمٍ وَّحَمِيْمٍ ۝٤٢ وَّظِلٍّ مِّنْ يَّحْمُوْمٍ ۝٤٣ لَّا بَارِدٍ وَّلَا كَرِيْمٍ ۝٤٤[14]

These verses depict the fate of the companions of the left hand, i.e. people who will be handed over their accounts in their left hands. They shall be amid scorching winds, blazing fire and seething water. When after being agonized by the heat they will run towards water, they will only get boiling water to drink. They will spend their life in this running about. This subject is discussed thus in the previous *sūrah*: يَطُوْفُوْنَ بَيْنَهَا وَبَيْنَ حَمِيْمٍ اٰنٍ (٥٥:٤٤) (they shall circle around it between it and its boiling water, (55:44)).

The words وَّظِلٍّ مِّنْ يَّحْمُوْمٍ imply that they will not be able to see any shade. Only the shade of black smoke will be there for them. It will be devoid of all the benefits which a shade has. The real benefit of shade is coolness; however, the shade of this smoke will contain all the harms which are found in smoke but will have no coolness. Similarly, there could have been some more benefits of this shade: for example, asylum from the reach of the fire; however, this too would not be there for them. The word كَرِيْمٍ means "one that has benefits." In other words, the words imply that this shade will neither be cool nor of any benefit. In Sūrah al-Mursalāt, this subject is discussed in the following words: لَّا ظَلِيْلٍ وَّلَا يُغْنِيْ مِنَ اللَّهَبِ. (٧٧:٣١) (it does not provide shade nor protection from the flames, (77:31)).

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13. Among them will be many from later generations and also many from the early ones.

14. As for the companions of the left hand! What a fate shall befall them! They shall be amidst scorching winds and seething water and in the shade of smoke which will neither be cool nor with any other benefit.

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اِنَّهُمْ كَانُوْا قَبْلَ ذٰلِكَ مُتْرَفِيْنَ ﴿٤٥﴾ وَ كَانُوْا يُصِرُّوْنَ عَلَى الْحِنْثِ الْعَظِيْمِ ﴿٤٦﴾ وَ كَانُوْا يَقُوْلُوْنَ ۙ اَئِذَا مِتْنَا وَ كُنَّا تُرَابًا وَّ عِظَامًا ءَاِنَّا لَمَبْعُوْثُوْنَ ﴿٤٧﴾ اَوَ اٰبَآؤُنَا الْاَوَّلُوْنَ ﴿٤٨﴾[15]

These verses refer to their major sins which led them to this fate. The style of the discourse is such as if their fate has been revealed to them and it is being told why these unfortunate people reached this fate.

The first thing mentioned is اِنَّهُمْ كَانُوْا قَبْلَ ذٰلِكَ مُتْرَفِيْنَ: These people were very affluent and lived in luxury and lavishness in the previous world. This is not a mention of their crime. It only mentions its severity. What is implied is that the Almighty had blessed them with comfort and affluence; it was their obligation to these favours that they be grateful and obedient to Him; on the contrary, they became arrogant and conceited, and became adamant on the greatest of sins.

The second objective is to highlight the elevation and relegation which is mentioned as an attribute of the Day of Judgement at the beginning of the *sūrah* by the words: خَافِضَةٌ رَّافِعَةٌ. People who were at the top in this world have fallen into the deep pit of the Almighty's punishment.

In the verse وَ كَانُوْا يُصِرُّوْنَ عَلَى الْحِنْثِ الْعَظِيْمِ, the word حِنث means "sin." It is qualified by the word (great) which indicates that it refers to polytheism. As per the philosophy of religion, polytheism is the greatest sin, and the Qur'ān has also referred to it as the greatest wrong.

The verses وَ كَانُوْا يَقُوْلُوْنَ ۙ اَئِذَا مِتْنَا وَ كُنَّا تُرَابًا وَّ عِظَامًا ءَاِنَّا لَمَبْعُوْثُوْنَ ﴿٤٧﴾ اَوَ اٰبَآؤُنَا الْاَوَّلُوْنَ ﴿٤٨﴾ mention their other crimes: they did not believe in the Day of Judgement and the reward and punishment that will take place on that day; they reckoned that it was impossible to raise them to life after their bodies would decay and decompose into dust. So when they would be informed of the reward and punishment of the Hereafter, they would make fun of it by asking how they and their forefathers who passed away a long time ago would be raised to life again when they would be nothing but dust and bones. The implication would be that this is an unlikely matter, and those who are threatening them with this fate are merely trying to fool them and they too are foolish.

قُلْ اِنَّ الْاَوَّلِيْنَ وَ الْاٰخِرِيْنَ ﴿٤٩﴾ لَمَجْمُوْعُوْنَ ۙ اِلٰى مِيْقَاتِ يَوْمٍ مَّعْلُوْمٍ ﴿٥٠﴾[16]

After mentioning the crimes of the companions of the left hand, the Prophet (sws) is

15. Before this, they lived in comfort and persisted in the greatest sin and say: "Would that when we die and turn to dust and bones, shall we be raised to life again? And our forefathers, too?"

16. Tell them: "Those of old and those of the present age shall all be brought together till the prescribed time of an appointed day.

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asked to answer the Quraysh. He should tell them that in response to his reminders about the Hereafter, they too regard it to be an improbable event; so they should now listen up that all the earlier and later people will be kept on being gathered till a fixed time; as soon as that time arrives, they shall be raised to life again. In other words, what is conveyed to them is that they must not think that if the dead have vanished from among them, they have also vanished from the Almighty. All of them are being assembled in the repository of God, and as soon as the time of reward and punishment comes, all of them will be raised – whether they are from the earlier generations or the later ones. The preposition اِلٰی is used after لَمَجْمُوعُونَ the way it is said in Sūrah An'ām: كَتَبَ عَلٰى نَفْسِهِ الرَّحْمَةَ ۭ لَيَجْمَعَنَّكُمْ اِلٰى يَوْمِ الْقِيٰمَةِ.(۱۲:٦) (God has decreed mercy for Himself, and will necessarily keep gathering you till the Day of Judgement, (6:12)).

ثُمَّ اِنَّكُمْ اَيُّهَا الضَّاۗلُّوْنَ الْمُكَذِّبُوْنَ ۝۵۱ لَاٰكِلُوْنَ مِنْ شَجَرٍ مِّنْ زَقُّوْمٍ ۝۵۲ فَمَالِـُٔوْنَ مِنْهَا الْبُطُوْنَ ۝۵۳ فَشٰرِبُوْنَ عَلَيْهِ مِنَ الْحَمِيْمِ ۝۵۴ فَشٰرِبُوْنَ شُرْبَ الْهِيْمِ ۝۵۵[17]

Here the Quraysh are addressed directly and told: O you who have gone astray and those who have denied, do you know what will happen when you will be raised up again? You shall eat from the sour and thorny leaves and fruits of the tree of *zaqqūm* and fill your bellies with it; then you shall drink scalding water like thirsty camels do.

They are addressed by the two attributes of الضَّاۗلُّوْنَ and الْمُكَذِّبُوْنَ with regard to their crimes. Earlier on, their polytheism and denial of the Hereafter is mentioned. With respect to these, they are addressed as الضَّاۗلُّوْنَ and الْمُكَذِّبُوْنَ. The implication is that they have gone astray from the path of monotheism and have also denied the Hereafter.

Earlier, it is said that they were among the wealthy and the affluent. With reference to this, their fodder in the Hereafter will be of *zaqqūm*. They will munch its leaves and thorns and drink boiling water after gulping them.

The word هِيْم is a plural of أَهْيَم. It refers to a camel who is afflicted with the malady of هيام (perpetual thirst): he keeps drinking water but his thirst is never quenched.

هٰذَا نُزُلُهُمْ يَوْمَ الدِّيْنِ ۝۵۶[18]

I have explained at many places of this exegesis that نُزُل refers to the edibles which are presented foremost to a guest as soon as he disembarks. The implication is that no one can imagine what these people – whose first dietary provisions are the tree of *zaqqūm* and hot water – will eat later.

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17. Then you people! O those who have been led astray and who have denied the truth! You shall eat from the tree of *zaqqūm* and fill your bellies with it. Then upon this you shall drink scalding water like a thirsty camel.

18. This shall be their first feast on the Day of Reckoning.

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Section II (Verses 57-74)

The succeeding verses discuss the arguments about the Day of Judgement and the reward and punishment which will take place on that day – something whose denial had been mentioned earlier. The style has an air of rebuke and reprimand in it. The coherence in the discourse is very evident.

Readers may now proceed to read these verses.

نَحْنُ خَلَقْنٰكُمْ فَلَوْلَا تُصَدِّقُوْنَ ﴿٥٧﴾ اَفَرَءَيْتُمْ مَّا تُمْنُوْنَ ﴿٥٨﴾ ءَاَنْتُمْ تَخْلُقُوْنَهٗٓ اَمْ نَحْنُ الْخٰلِقُوْنَ ﴿٥٩﴾ نَحْنُ قَدَّرْنَا بَيْنَكُمُ
الْمَوْتَ وَمَا نَحْنُ بِمَسْبُوْقِيْنَ ﴿٦٠﴾ عَلٰٓى اَنْ نُّبَدِّلَ اَمْثَالَكُمْ وَنُنْشِئَكُمْ فِيْ مَا لَا تَعْلَمُوْنَ ﴿٦١﴾ وَلَقَدْ عَلِمْتُمُ النَّشْاَةَ الْاُوْلٰى
فَلَوْلَا تَذَكَّرُوْنَ ﴿٦٢﴾ اَفَرَءَيْتُمْ مَّا تَحْرُثُوْنَ ﴿٦٣﴾ ءَاَنْتُمْ تَزْرَعُوْنَهٗٓ اَمْ نَحْنُ الزّٰرِعُوْنَ ﴿٦٤﴾ لَوْ نَشَآءُ لَجَعَلْنٰهُ حُطَامًا فَظَلْتُمْ
تَفَكَّهُوْنَ ﴿٦٥﴾ اِنَّا لَمُغْرَمُوْنَ ﴿٦٦﴾ بَلْ نَحْنُ مَحْرُوْمُوْنَ ﴿٦٧﴾ اَفَرَءَيْتُمُ الْمَآءَ الَّذِيْ تَشْرَبُوْنَ ﴿٦٨﴾ ءَاَنْتُمْ اَنْزَلْتُمُوْهُ مِنَ
الْمُزْنِ اَمْ نَحْنُ الْمُنْزِلُوْنَ ﴿٦٩﴾ لَوْ نَشَآءُ جَعَلْنٰهُ اُجَاجًا فَلَوْلَا تَشْكُرُوْنَ ﴿٧٠﴾ اَفَرَءَيْتُمُ النَّارَ الَّتِيْ تُوْرُوْنَ ﴿٧١﴾ ءَاَنْتُمْ اَنْشَاْتُمْ
شَجَرَتَهَآ اَمْ نَحْنُ الْمُنْشِـُٔوْنَ ﴿٧٢﴾ نَحْنُ جَعَلْنٰهَا تَذْكِرَةً وَّمَتَاعًا لِّلْمُقْوِيْنَ ﴿٧٣﴾ فَسَبِّحْ بِاسْمِ رَبِّكَ الْعَظِيْمِ ﴿٧٤﴾

We have created you. So why do not you testify to the Day of Judgement? Have you pondered on that which you discharge? Do you fashion it or We? We have ordained death among you, and We are not helpless; in fact, We have the power to replace you with those like you and raise you in a world you know not. And you surely know of the first creation. So why then do you not receive a reminder from it? (57-62)

Have you reflected on what you sow? Is it you who nourish it or We? If We intend, We can turn it into bits; then you would end up bewildered. Indeed we have been fined; in fact we have been completely deprived. (63-67)

Just reflect on the water which you drink! Was it you who sent it down from the clouds or We? If We desire, We can turn it totally bitter; so why do not you people express gratitude? (68-70)

Just reflect on the fire which you light. Did you create its tree or We? We made it a reminder, and for the traveller a very beneficial thing. (71-73)

Glorify, then, the name of your Lord, the Supreme One. (74)

Explanation

نَحْنُ خَلَقْنٰكُمْ فَلَوْلَا تُصَدِّقُوْنَ ﴿٥٧﴾[19]

The address is directed to those who have denied the Day of Judgement – those whose statement ءَاِذَا مِتْنَا وَكُنَّا تُرَابًا وَّ عِظَامًا ءَاِنَّا لَمَبْعُوْثُوْنَ (would that when we die and turn to dust and bones, shall we be raised to life again) is cited earlier. The Almighty has said

19. We have created you. So why do not you testify to the Day of Judgement?

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that when He has created them and they do not deny this reality, then why are they hesitant in testifying to the Day of Judgement. The implication is that when the Almighty was not helpless in creating them the first time, how can He be powerless to create them a second time? Is creating the first time more difficult or the second? It is strange logic on their part that they acknowledge the happening of an event which is more difficult and what is obviously easier than it is regarded to be impossible by them. After the verb تُصَدِّقُونَ, its object بِالدِّيْن or بِالْبَعْث is suppressed because of concomitant indications.

اَفَرَءَيْتُمْ مَّا تُمْنُوْنَ ﴿۵۸﴾ ءَاَنْتُمْ تَخْلُقُوْنَهٗٓ اَمْ نَحْنُ الْخٰلِقُوْنَ ﴿۵۹﴾[20]

These verses direct attention to man's creation: if a person thinks that his own planning has some role in his creation without which the Almighty could not have created him, then he should come forward and see what role he has in it. A person only deposits a drop of his semen in the womb of his wife and then goes away. Who takes it out from this womb in the form of a healthy child after making it pass through various stages in layers of darkness and who makes it pass through the phases of childhood, maturity, youth and old age? Obviously, all these take place bythe power and wisdom of God. So the God who can cause such changes on a drop of fluid and does not need anyone to fashion it, how is it difficult for Him to recreate man from merely the particles of dust without making him pass through these stages?

نَحْنُ قَدَّرْنَا بَيْنَكُمُ الْمَوْتَ وَمَا نَحْنُ بِمَسْبُوْقِيْنَ ﴿۶۰﴾[21]

The implication of this verse is that there is no question for anyone to even imagine that he can escape from the clutches of God. The Almighty has spread out the web of death between people, and such is the nature of this web that everything is in its clasp. Whether a person is of high or low status and whether he is rich or poor, he is bound to face death. In this manner, the Almighty is gathering each and every person for the Day of Judgement. In verses 83-87, this subject will be brought up in detail.

عَلٰٓى اَنْ نُّبَدِّلَ اَمْثَالَكُمْ وَنُنْشِئَكُمْ فِيْ مَا لَا تَعْلَمُوْنَ ﴿۶۱﴾[22]

The implication of this verse is that if both life and death are in the control of God, how can He be unable to create in man's place a similar being? The fact of the matter is that God is not powerless to do this; He has the power to create someone similar, and to raise man up in a world he knows not.

---

20. Have you pondered on that which you discharge? Do you fashion it or We?

21. We have ordained death among you, and We are not helpless;

22. We have the power to replace you with those like you and raise you in a world you know not.

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The word عَلٰى shows that the words وَمَا نَحْنُ بِمَسْبُوْقِيْنَ should be taken in their positive meaning ie. (having power). The meaning thus would be that God is not powerless; He is powerful. Readers have witnessed in this exegesis the changes in ellipsis and brevity caused by a change in preposition. This topic is discussed in Sūrah al-Ma'ārij thus:

اِنَّا لَقٰدِرُوْنَ. عَلٰٓى اَنْ نُّبَدِّلَ خَيْرًا مِّنْهُمْ ۙ وَمَا نَحْنُ بِمَسْبُوْقِيْنَ. (٧٠: ٤٠-٤١)

We can create them in a better form and We are not powerless in this regard. (70: 40-41)

The words وَنُنْشِئَكُمْ فِيْ مَا لَا تَعْلَمُوْنَ imply that God will create man in a world whose physical laws will be totally different, and he is totally unaware of them. He expresses wonder and incredulity keeping in view the phenomenon of life and death found in this world at the fact that, mankind at the sound of a trumpet, will be recreated after its bodies decompose, and then each and every person will be faced with the account of his deeds. The fact is that all this will happen and then each person will be destined to live eternally in Paradise or in Hell.

وَلَقَدْ عَلِمْتُمُ النَّشْاَةَ الْاُوْلٰى فَلَوْلَا تَذَكَّرُوْنَ ﴿٦٢﴾[23]

The implication of this verse is that if a person has not seen the world in which the Almighty will recreate Him, then this is not a logical reason for becoming adamant on its denial. A person does witness his creation in this world; why does he not learn the lesson from it that there is nothing improbable in being created again? Nothing is beyond the power of the Creator Who has brought mankind into this world. He can recreate them also and His providence and wisdom also entail that He do this. If He does not do this, then this would render this world to be meaningless and it is not befitting for the Creator of this universe to do something like this.

اَفَرَءَيْتُمْ مَّا تَحْرُثُوْنَ ﴿٦٣﴾ ءَاَنْتُمْ تَزْرَعُوْنَهٗٓ اَمْ نَحْنُ الزّٰرِعُوْنَ ﴿٦٤﴾[24]

After mentioning the creation of man, mentioned now are the sources of His providence which the Almighty has made available for nurturing and nourishing him. Neither is a person entitled to these resources nor are they a result of his own planning. It needs to be kept in consideration that the Qur'ān at various places and in different styles has cited as an argument in favour of reward and punishment the various favours the Almighty has blessed man with to which he had no entitlement:

23. And you surely know of the first creation. So why then do you not receive a reminder from it?

24. Have you reflected on what you sow? Is it you who nourish it or We?

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the fact that they have been bestowed on him even though he had not earned them shows that one day he will be asked about each of these favours. The Qur'ān has also mentioned at various instances the fact that for the majority these favours became a basis of their arrogance. They thought that they were a result of their own planning and ability and that they had a right to these favours and in this conceit disregarded the Hereafter. If anyone tried to remind them of it, they gave the same answer which is cited earlier in the *sūrah* through the tongue of the affluent.

The verse prods the addressees and asks them: have they ever deliberated on what they sow in the land. Is it they who nurture the seeds sown or is it God Who does so; just as in the birth of children all that a person does is that he sprinkles the seeds in the earth and ploughs the land and he very well sees that after that all the remaining phases are completed by God in a very elaborate manner; similarly, it is God Who has given land the ability to nourish the seeds sown in it. It is He who has instilled in a seed the ability to benefit from the heat and fluids of the earth and bring forth from it needles of the plant stem and then He endowed these needles with the power to cleave asunder the chest of the earth and come out and grow in the open. Then it is God alone who supports these needles with stalks and causes the leaves to grow from them, and brings forth spikes, fruits and flowers from them. Finally, they ripen and fill the needs of the farmer. A person should reflect on which of these tasks is accomplished by him and which he is potentially capable of.

لَوۡ نَشَآءُ لَجَعَلۡنٰهُ حُطَامًا فَظَلۡتُمۡ تَفَكَّهُوۡنَ ﴿٦٥﴾[25]

In this matter, man's helplessness is evident from the fact that if God wants He can, by sending a strong wind or a hailstorm, rout the blooming harvest at the very time people are expressing joy at this success. The crop could be rendered to bits and pieces whilst people are busy indulging in frivolous talk.

The word تَفَكَّهُوۡنَ is used here sarcastically. The implied meaning is that people will become so unnerved that they would not understand any explanation of this mishap and would have no clue of how others can help them in assessing the extent of this loss. Each person will have his own explanation to offer. Details are forthcoming.

اِنَّا لَمُغۡرَمُوۡنَ ﴿٦٦﴾ بَلۡ نَحۡنُ مَحۡرُوۡمُوۡنَ ﴿٦٧﴾[26]

Some will say: "We have been burdened by a penalty and were not even able to reap what we sowed." Some others will say: "This calamity has totally deprived us; how can we now spend on the upbringing of the family and spend on our daily living." In Sūrah al-Qalam, the parable of the companions of the orchard is mentioned

25. If We intend, We can turn it into bits; then you would end up bewildered.
26. Indeed we have been fined; in fact we have been completely deprived.

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which portrays this complete situation:

اِنَّا بَلَوْنٰهُمْ كَمَا بَلَوْنَآ اَصْحٰبَ الْجَنَّةِ ۚ اِذْ اَقْسَمُوْا لَيَصْرِمُنَّهَا مُصْبِحِيْنَ. وَلَا يَسْتَثْنُوْنَ. فَطَافَ عَلَيْهَا طَآئِفٌ مِّنْ رَّبِّكَ وَهُمْ نَآئِمُوْنَ. فَاَصْبَحَتْ كَالصَّرِيْمِ. فَتَنَادَوْا مُصْبِحِيْنَ. اَنِ اغْدُوْا عَلٰى حَرْثِكُمْ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ صٰرِمِيْنَ. فَانْطَلَقُوْا وَهُمْ يَتَخَافَتُوْنَ. اَنْ لَّا يَدْخُلَنَّهَا الْيَوْمَ عَلَيْكُمْ مِّسْكِيْنٌ. وَّغَدَوْا عَلٰى حَرْدٍ قٰدِرِيْنَ. فَلَمَّا رَاَوْهَا قَالُوْٓا اِنَّا لَضَآلُّوْنَ. بَلْ نَحْنُ مَحْرُوْمُوْنَ. (٦٨: ١٧-٢٧)

We put them through a test just as We put the owners of the orchard through a test when they swore that they would surely pick the fruit of their orchard in the morning and would not leave anything. Then whilst they were asleep, a mover from your Lord moved through it in such a manner that it became like a crop harvested. At daybreak, they called out to one another: "Go early in the morning to your plantation if you are to pick its fruit." Then off they went whispering to one another: "No needy person should set foot in this orchard today." And they proceeded with resolve and determination. But when they saw it, they cried out: "Surely we have lost our way; in fact, we have been ruined." (68: 17-27)

اَفَرَءَيْتُمُ الْمَآءَ الَّذِيْ تَشْرَبُوْنَ ﴿٦٨﴾ ءَاَنْتُمْ اَنْزَلْتُمُوْهُ مِنَ الْمُزْنِ اَمْ نَحْنُ الْمُنْزِلُوْنَ ﴿٦٩﴾[27]

After mentioning the blessings related to food, attention is now drawn to the blessing of water. The question is asked by the Almighty: Have people deliberated on the water they drink; Is it they who bring it down from the clouds or is it We? The implication is that God's power, wisdom and providence converts the bitter water of the seas into water vapours and then once again rains it down on man in the form of pure, sweet and wholesome water; he drinks from it and so does his cattle and this rain also waters their lands. Who has this power to bring down rain from the clouds? It should remain in consideration that all the experiments done by scientists so far to create artificial rain are nothing beyond child play.

لَوْ نَشَآءُ جَعَلْنٰهُ اُجَاجًا فَلَوْلَا تَشْكُرُوْنَ ﴿٧٠﴾[28]

If the Almighty wants, He can make this water so bitter and sour that it becomes useless for man. The implication is that when God is able to turn the bitter into sweet, it is not difficult for Him to turn the sweet into bitter.

The words فَلَوْ لَا تَشْكُرُوْنَ mention what is entailed by providence: all these favours require that man remain obedient to his Lord or else get ready to face punishment for his ungratefulness. The status and significance of gratitude to God has already been

27. Just reflect on the water which you drink! Was it you who sent it down from the clouds or We?

28. If We desire, We can turn it totally bitter; so why do not you people express gratitude?

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highlighted in Sūrah al-Fātiḥah. Readers are required to look it up. It is this very sentiment which induces a person to take the first step towards his Lord, and after reaching his destination, he will express this very sentiment when he sees the results of his labour. The Qur'ānic words are: وَاٰخِرُ دَعْوٰىهُمْ اَنِ الْحَمْدُ لِلّٰهِ رَبِّ الْعٰلَمِيْنَ

اَفَرَءَيْتُمُ النَّارَ الَّتِيْ تُوْرُوْنَ ﴿٧١﴾ ءَاَنْتُمْ اَنْشَاْتُمْ شَجَرَتَهَآ اَمْ نَحْنُ الْمُنْشِـُٔوْنَ ﴿٧٢﴾[29]

After water, fire occupied a very significant place in the needs of life, especially for people who had to undertake long journeys in the deserts. At that time, neither were there any human settlements where in times of need fire could be made available nor was fire something of the sort which a person can carry with his provisions. Moreover, match sticks had not been invented till then. The Almighty in order to remind such needy people of His providence had created certain types of stones which can be rubbed together to produce fire. He was even more gracious in this regard by creating two particular trees which could produce fire by rubbing two of their branches together. They are called *markh* and *'afār*. Sūrah Yasīn also mentions this tree. The verse asks its addressees to reflect on the fact whether it is God who fulfils this very big need or it is them.

نَحْنُ جَعَلْنٰهَا تَذْكِرَةً وَّمَتَاعًا لِّلْمُقْوِيْنَ ﴿٧٣﴾[30]

The Almighty has made this tree a reminder as well as a benefit for those who travel in the deserts. The word مُقْوِيْنَ is used for travellers who journey through deserts and desolate lands where it is difficult to obtain fire. The antecedent of the feminine pronoun in جَعَلْنٰهَا can be شَجَرَةٌ (tree) as well as the fire which it produces. In both cases, there will not be any difference in meaning.

The word تَذْكِرَةٌ means "reminder." Though this reminder has many aspects, I will allude to two of them which occupy special significance.

First, this is a great sign of God's sustenance. His providence imposes the responsibility of accountability on a person. This entails that reward and punishment in Heaven and Hell respectively take place. I have been explaining this point at various places in this exegesis.

Second, the information given by the Almighty that Hell will contain fire and also the tree of *zaqqūm* is a fact. No one should make fun of it thinking that it is against sense and reason. The God who can create fire from the evergreen branches of the trees of *markh* and *'afār* has no problem in creating the tree of *zaqqūm* in Hell.

In verse sixty of Sūrah Banī Isrā'īl, it has been mentioned that the people of the Quraysh who had no fear of the Hereafter would make fun of the Qur'ān that it informs of fire in Hell and at the same time says that it will also have the tree of

29. Just reflect on the fire which you light. Did you create its tree or We?

30. We made it a reminder, and for the traveller a very beneficial thing.

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zaqqūm. At that instance, a rejoinder to their making fun was given through another aspect which I have explained. Since in verses 52-53 too *zaqqūm* is mentioned, so once the fire producing tree is mentioned, attention was also directed to the fact that people who regard the union of fire and tree in Hell as impossible should learn a lesson from this tree in which God has combined both.

فَسَبِّحْ بِاسْمِ رَبِّكَ الْعَظِيمِ ﴿٩٦﴾[31]

Here at the end of the discussion, the Prophet (sws) is directed to strongly adhere to his stance and to keep glorifying God. The reason for emphasizing this is that as far as the arguments are concerned, they are in his favour, yet these stubborn people are not budging to accept them; therefore, the Prophet (sws) should not care about them; he should remain engaged in glorifying the Almighty i.e. celebrating his purity. The implication is that these people who have been blinded by their desires reckon that the Almighty has created this world only to bless them with luxury and comfort; they are not aware that the Almighty is above and too pure to create something for their jest or sport. It is incumbent upon Him to bring a day in which He rewards the grateful for their gratitude and takes to task the ingrates.

The preposition ب in بِاسْمِ رَبِّكَ shows that the word here also embraces the meaning of إِسْتِعَانَةٌ (help) which would incorporate a further meaning in the expression viz. He should glorify the name of His Lord and seek His help to combat these circumstances.

The word اسم shows that the only means of a person's association and relationship with the Almighty are His noble attributes. It is by comprehending them that one gets a comprehension of God which is the fountainhead of true knowledge and deeds.

Section III (Verses 75-96)

Coming up are the closing verses of the *sūrah.* The leaders of the Quraysh are addressed and told that the certain event the Qur'ān is informing them of is a reality. They should not try to escape from it or to refute it. The Qur'ān is not from among the nonsensical utterances of the soothsayers; it has come down from the preserved treasure of God's knowledge. It is a noble discourse which has been revealed through pure means to a pure Messenger. It is secure and free from the tampering and interference of the devils. It is an eternal guidance and an everlasting spiritual food for them. They should not invite their doom by not valuing or honouring it and by refuting it. They should remember that no one can escape God's grasp and the elevation and relegation of which they are being informed will soon be seen by them with all its consequences and corollaries.

31. Glorify, then, the name of your Lord, the Supreme One.

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Readers may now proceed to read the subsequent verses.

فَلَآ اُقْسِمُ بِمَوٰقِعِ النُّجُوْمِ ﴿۷۵﴾ وَاِنَّهٗ لَقَسَمٌ لَّوْ تَعْلَمُوْنَ عَظِيْمٌ ﴿۷۶﴾ اِنَّهٗ لَقُرْاٰنٌ كَرِيْمٌ ﴿۷۷﴾ فِيْ كِتٰبٍ مَّكْنُوْنٍ ﴿۷۸﴾ لَّا يَمَسُّهٗٓ اِلَّا
الْمُطَهَّرُوْنَ ﴿۷۹﴾ تَنْزِيْلٌ مِّنْ رَّبِّ الْعٰلَمِيْنَ ﴿۸۰﴾ اَفَبِهٰذَا الْحَدِيْثِ اَنْتُمْ مُّدْهِنُوْنَ ﴿۸۱﴾ وَتَجْعَلُوْنَ رِزْقَكُمْ اَنَّكُمْ تُكَذِّبُوْنَ
﴿۸۲﴾ فَلَوْلَآ اِذَا بَلَغَتِ الْحُلْقُوْمَ ﴿۸۳﴾ وَاَنْتُمْ حِيْنَىِٕذٍ تَنْظُرُوْنَ ﴿۸۴﴾ وَنَحْنُ اَقْرَبُ اِلَيْهِ مِنْكُمْ وَلٰكِنْ لَّا تُبْصِرُوْنَ ﴿۸۵﴾ فَلَوْلَآ
اِنْ كُنْتُمْ غَيْرَ مَدِيْنِيْنَ ﴿۸۶﴾ تَرْجِعُوْنَهَآ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ صٰدِقِيْنَ ﴿۸۷﴾ فَاَمَّآ اِنْ كَانَ مِنَ الْمُقَرَّبِيْنَ ﴿۸۸﴾ فَرَوْحٌ وَّ رَيْحَانٌ ۙ وَّ جَنَّتُ
نَعِيْمٍ ﴿۸۹﴾ وَاَمَّآ اِنْ كَانَ مِنْ اَصْحٰبِ الْيَمِيْنِ ﴿۹۰﴾ فَسَلٰمٌ لَّكَ مِنْ اَصْحٰبِ الْيَمِيْنِ ﴿۹۱﴾ وَاَمَّآ اِنْ كَانَ مِنَ الْمُكَذِّبِيْنَ
الضَّآلِّيْنَ ﴿۹۲﴾ فَنُزُلٌ مِّنْ حَمِيْمٍ ﴿۹۳﴾ وَّتَصْلِيَةُ جَحِيْمٍ ﴿۹۴﴾ اِنَّ هٰذَا لَهُوَ حَقُّ الْيَقِيْنِ ﴿۹۵﴾ فَسَبِّحْ بِاسْمِ رَبِّكَ الْعَظِيْمِ ﴿۹۶﴾

Thus no! I swear by the place in which the stars fall! And indeed this is a mighty oath if you but know it! Indeed, this is a glorious Qur'ān! In a protected book. None touch it except the purified; a revelation from the Lord of the Universe. So, do you people show indifference to this discourse and refute what is sustenance for you! (75-82)

If you think that you are subservient to no one, then at that time why do not you when under your very eyes a man's soul reaches his throat and We are nearer to him than you, though you cannot see Us – so, why do not you restore this person's life if you are subservient to no one if you are truthful. (83-87)

Thus, if he is from among the favoured ones, for him is bliss and ecstasy and a garden of delight. And if he is from among the companions of the right hand, then peace be to you O companion of the right hand. And if he is from those who have denied and has been led astray, then for him is the feast of scalding water and entry to Hell. (88-94)

Indeed all these things are true and inevitable. Glorify, then, the name of your Lord, the Supreme One. (95-96)

Explanation

فَلَآ اُقْسِمُ بِمَوٰقِعِ النُّجُوْمِ ﴿۷۵﴾[32]

Here the particle لَا is not connected to the next word اُقْسِمُ. It is totally separate from it. Before the affirmation, the particle serves to negate the wrong view of the addressee. Such a negation is very common in Arabic as well as in the Qur'ān. In Sūrah al-Nisā', the words are: فَلَا وَرَبِّكَ لَا يُؤْمِنُوْنَ حَتّٰى يُحَكِّمُوْكَ فِيْمَا شَجَرَ بَيْنَهُمْ . (٤:٦٥) (but they will not – I swear by your Lord – they will not be true believers until they seek your arbitration in their disputes, (4:65)). In other words, if these Hypocrites think that by merely uttering words they have embraced faith, then this notion of theirs is

32. Thus no! I swear by the place in which the stars fall!

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absolutely wrong. After this, it is stated on oath that these people cannot be true believers until they accept Muḥammad (sws) as the arbitrator in all their disputes.

In the verse under discussion too, before the oath, the particle لَا serves to refute the false notion of the addressees that the Qur'ān, God forbid, is a revelation from among the nonsensical utterances of the soothsayers. After that, an oath is sworn by the exaltedness and sanctity of the Qur'ān and by the fact that it is the word of God. This style of language is a very natural style and for this reason is found in every language. It is even present in the Urdu language (the case of English is no different). When it is said: "No by God! The truth is this," we employ this very style and the objective is to negate some notion, view or objection of an addressee before affirming the real truth. The eloquence in this style is that so baseless is the objection of the objector that the speaker does not even want to wait for a moment to put up with it. He is not even ready to negate it after explaining the true aspect.

Most people regard لَا to be superfluous. However, in the first place, there are no superfluous words in an eloquent discourse, but if, for the sake of supposition there are, then there is great danger in regarding the letter لَا to be so. If without any principle, this letter is regarded to be superfluous, then this can open up a lot of forbidden things in religion. However, a detailed discussion on this issue is not required here. *Inshā'Allāh* under verse 29 (لِّئَلَّا يَعْلَمَ اَهْلُ الْكِتٰبِ) of the coming *sūrah*, Sūrah al-Ḥadīd, I will discuss this issue in detail. The لَا in that verse too has been regarded as superfluous by the exegetes. I will, God willing show, that this is in full accordance with the linguistic style of Arabic.

The word مَوَاقِع is the plural of مَوْقَع which means the place where something happens or falls. Here it is used for the abodes and check-posts where shooting stars are pelted at the devils who sit in them and try to eavesdrop on divine secrets. It is evident from the Qur'ān that there were devils among the jinn who had selected some special abodes in the heavens in which they would sit for this purpose. At the time of the revelation of the Qur'ān, the Almighty made special arrangements to protect his revelations from their interference: those who would try to sit in these abodes to eavesdrop would be pelted with shooting stars. The jinn themselves have acknowledged this fact, as recorded in Sūrah Jinn thus:

وَّاَنَّا لَمَسْنَا السَّمَآءَ فَوَجَدْنٰهَا مُلِئَتْ حَرَسًا شَدِيْدًا وَّ شُهُبًا. وَّاَنَّا كُنَّا نَقْعُدُ مِنْهَا مَقَاعِدَ لِلسَّمْعِ ؕ فَمَنْ يَّسْتَمِعِ الْاٰنَ يَجِدْ لَهٗ شِهَابًا رَّصَدًا. (۷۲:۸-۹)

And we deeply observed the heavens and found it filled with stern guards and darting stars. And we were able to sit in some of its stations to eavesdrop, but now whoever tries to eavesdrop finds a darting meteor waiting for him. (72:8-9)

In my opinion, the word used for the ambuscades of the jinn in Sūrah Jinn is called

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مَوٰقِعِ in the verse under discussion. The only difference is that the first word refers to their ambuscade and the second to the targets of the shooting stars. The word النُّجُوْمِ here refers to shooting stars. In Sūrah al-Mulk, the words used are: وَلَقَدْ زَيَّنَّا السَّمَآءَ الدُّنْيَا بِمَصَابِيْحَ وَجَعَلْنٰهَا رُجُوْمًا لِّلشَّيٰطِيْنِ (٥:٦٧) (and We have adorned the lowest heaven with lamps and made them a means of bombardment on the devils, (67:5)). Explanation on these shooting stars is found in verses 1-5 of Sūrah al-Najm and verse 35 of Sūrah al-Raḥmān. Readers may look it up.

وَاِنَّهٗ لَقَسَمٌ لَّوْ تَعْلَمُوْنَ عَظِيْمٌ ﴿٧٦﴾[33]

This is a very apt parenthetical sentence between the object of the oath and the complement of the oath. The implication is that just as these people very stubbornly regard the Qur'ān to be inspired by the devils, in the same manner they will ask what the relation of shooting stars with the bombardment of the devils is; however, if they reflect, they will come to know that this oath carries a great testimony in it: the jinn and the devils have no access to the divine realm as claimed by the soothsayers. If anyone wants to get there, the Almighty has made elaborate arrangements to deal with him. No one can protect himself from the shooting stars of God. In other words, whether they are able to know this or not and whether they believe in it or not, the Almighty has revealed a great secret of this universe in this oath.

اِنَّهٗ لَقُرْاٰنٌ كَرِيْمٌ ﴿٧٧﴾ فِيْ كِتٰبٍ مَّكْنُوْنٍ ﴿٧٨﴾ لَّا يَمَسُّهٗٓ اِلَّا الْمُطَهَّرُوْنَ ﴿٧٩﴾ تَنْزِيْلٌ مِّنْ رَّبِّ الْعٰلَمِيْنَ ﴿٨٠﴾[34]

After the oath, this is the complement of the oath. It has been explained many a time in this exegesis that the oaths which occur in the Qur'ān are meant to bear witness. In other words, after referring to the fact that there exists an arrangement to pelt the devils on their interference, the addressees are warned that they should not regard this Qur'ān to be a discourse of the soothsayers; it is a very noble and exalted discourse. It is found in a protected book with the Almighty and no one except His pure angels can have access to it; only the angels which are close to God can touch it; the jinn and devils cannot even come near it.

The implication of the words تَنْزِيْلٌ مِّنْ رَّبِّ الْعٰلَمِيْنَ is that they should not, God forbid, equate Satanic revelations that come to the soothsayers with the Qur'ān. It is not inspired by the devils; it is inspired by the Almighty. The guarded tablet is its source. Except for the angels which are close to God, no one has access to it. It is Gabriel, the trustworthy, who is the closest among angels to God who brings it down, and devils can in no way influence them. It was revealed to Muḥammad (sws) whom the

33. And indeed this is a mighty oath if you but know it!

34. Indeed, this is a glorious Qur'ān. In a protected book. None touch it except the purified; a revelation from the Lord of the Universe.

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Almighty has protected from any kind of misguidance and deviation.

Our jurists have deduced a certain etiquette relating to ritual purity from the verse: لَّا يَمَسُّهٗٓ اِلَّا الْمُطَهَّرُوْنَ. In their opinion, it is only in the state of this purity that a person is allowed to touch or read the Qur'ān. However, it is evident from the context of the verse that this etiquette has no direct bearing on it. For this reason, whether our readers in the light of arguments accept these deductions or reject them, they fall beyond the ambit of our discussion. So I will not attempt to raise it here. However, I will only say that the view of those jurists who impose the same conditions of ritual purity in orally reading the Qur'ān or touching it which are required for offering the prayer are based on extremism. The Qur'ān is the Book of God and hence worthy of respect from every aspect. At the same time, it is a means for us to find out good and evil, truth and untruth; it is also a reference for making inferences and the basis of religious reasoning. If it is necessary for a person to be ritually pure and be in the state of *wuḍū* if he needs to touch it or read any of its verses or *sūrahs*, or give its reference, then this would be an unbearable burden which would be against the religion of nature. By imposing such unnatural restrictions, the same concept of Qur'ān's respect would arise for which Jesus (sws) has used the following words: "No one lights a lamp and then puts it under a basket. Instead, a lamp is placed on a stand, where it gives light to everyone in the house." (Matthew, 5:15)

اَفَبِهٰذَا الْحَدِيْثِ اَنْتُمْ مُّدْهِنُوْنَ ﴿۸۱﴾[35]

The word اِدهان means "to be indifferent, careless and lazy." After mentioning the exaltedness of the Qur'ān, the question is posed to them: does this Qur'ān which has been revealed in such an elaborate manner by the Almighty deserve the indifference from them that they are showing?

The implication is that they are not so naive and visionless that they are not able to distinguish a pebble from a pearl; they very well know the difference but do not want to accept the Qur'ān; for this reason they are showing indifference to it by regarding it to be the discourse of the soothsayers; however, they should remember that showing indifference to a reality cannot change it; a reality is always a reality and they will have to face it; it would have been in their own interest if they had given it due importance.

وَتَجْعَلُوْنَ رِزْقَكُمْ اَنَّكُمْ تُكَذِّبُوْنَ ﴿۸۲﴾[36]

The word رِزْقَ here refers to divine revelation or in other words to the Qur'ān. In ancient scriptures as well as in the Qur'an, divine revelation is called رِزْقَ at various places. I have already cited examples of this usage at an appropriate place of this

35. So, do you people show indifference to this discourse.

36. And refute what is sustenance for you!

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exegesis. Jesus (sws) is reported to have said: "Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God," (Matthew, 4:4)). The Qur'ān has also called divine revelation as life: اسْتَجِيْبُوْا لِلّٰهِ وَلِلرَّسُوْلِ اِذَا دَعَاكُمْ لِمَا يُحْيِيْكُمْ (٨:٢٤) (Obey God and the messenger when he calls you to that which gives you life, (8:24)). The verse would mean that the Almighty revealed divine sustenance for them so that they could attain eternal life from it; however, it is their misfortune that they are showing a degrading attitude towards it and not giving it its due importance.

فَلَوْلَآ اِذَا بَلَغَتِ الْحُلْقُوْمَ ﴿٨٣﴾ وَاَنْتُمْ حِيْنَىِٕذٍ تَنْظُرُوْنَ ﴿٨٤﴾ وَنَحْنُ اَقْرَبُ اِلَيْهِ مِنْكُمْ وَلٰكِنْ لَّا تُبْصِرُوْنَ ﴿٨٥﴾ فَلَوْلَآ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ غَيْرَ مَدِيْنِيْنَ ﴿٨٦﴾ تَرْجِعُوْنَهَآ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ صٰدِقِيْنَ ﴿٨٧﴾[37]

The implication of these verses is that why does not a person able to save himself or any of his near ones from the jaws of death if by obdurately making fun of the Qur'ān he thinks that the reward and punishment he is being threatened with is merely a bluff and that he is subservient to no one and that he will not be held accountable to anyone for his words and deeds. When death overtakes a person, at that time he finds himself to be alone and helpless and has to consign his soul to the angel of death. So while observing one's helplessness why does he regard himself to be all in all and free from any accountability? In verse 60 above, the words were: نَحْنُ قَدَّرْنَا بَيْنَكُمُ الْمَوْتَ وَمَا نَحْنُ بِمَسْبُوْقِيْنَ (We have ordained death among you, and We are not helpless). It is this reality which is divulged here in another way so that no one should consider himself to be all in all; no one is beyond God's grasp; everyone is bound to face death and death is destined for the very reason that it gathers all the dead so that they can be presented before God on an appointed day.

The subject of the verb بَلَغَتِ in فَلَوْلَآ اِذَا بَلَغَتِ الْحُلْقُوْمَ is نَفْسٌ (the soul) and is suppressed here because of concomitant indications. The meaning of the verse is: when the soul of a person gets stuck in his throat at the time of death. The subject of the verb is similarly suppressed in Sūrah Qiyāmah: كَلَّآ اِذَا بَلَغَتِ التَّرَاقِيَ (٧٥:٢٦). (Certainly not! On the Day when the soul will be stuck in the collar-bone, (75:26)). With respect to eloquence, the benefit of such an ellipses is that the horror of the event because of ambiguity becomes even more potent and effective.

The answer to لَوْلَا is coming up ahead in a very effective manner.

The implication of the verse وَاَنْتُمْ حِيْنَىِٕذٍ تَنْظُرُوْنَ is that is it not so that the event of death takes place without other people knowing it; the fact of the matter is that the near ones of the dying person and his well-wishers including his doctor are present

37. If you think that you are subservient to no one, then at that time why do not you when under your very eyes a man's soul reaches his throat and We are nearer to him than you, though you cannot see Us – so, why do not you restore this person's life if you are subservient to no one if you are truthful.

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around him; however, before their very eyes, the angel of death claims his soul and no one can stop him. No one can say that had he been near, he would have stopped the angel of death from doing his job; all their efforts and plans turn out to be useless in this regard.

The antecedent of the pronoun إِلَيْهِ in وَ نَحْنُ اَقْرَبُ اِلَيْهِ مِنْكُمْ وَ لٰكِنْ لَّا تُبْصِرُوْنَ is the dying person. His attendants are with him and God is even nearer to him but they cannot see Him. They can see the hand of their doctor but not the hand of the angel of death – how efficiently he claims the soul.

The verses فَلَوْلَآ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ غَيْرَ مَدِيْنِيْنَ. تَرْجِعُوْنَهَآ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ صٰدِقِيْنَ are an answer to the لَوْلَا mentioned above. Since the conditional clause and its answer were distanced from one another, the conditional clause has been repeated here. The verse says that if they think that they are not subservient to anyone who can seize them and punish them, then why do not they bring back to its body the soul claimed by the angel of death right before their eyes. The word مَدِيْنِيْنَ means "to be subservient and to be under control."

فَاَمَّآ اِنْ كَانَ مِنَ الْمُقَرَّبِيْنَ ﴿٨٨﴾ فَرَوْحٌ وَّ رَيْحَانٌ ۙ وَّ جَنَّتُ نَعِيْمٍ ﴿٨٩﴾[38]

People should not remain under the misconception that once a person dies everything will end; the fact of the matter is that the real phase will ensue after death which is mentioned above by the words: وَّكُنْتُمْ اَزْوَاجًا ثَلٰثَةً (٧). On that day, people will be necessarily divided into three categories: either a person will belong to the favoured ones or the companions of the right hand or the companions of the left hand. The verses under discussion say that if the person is from among the favoured ones, then for him there is eternal bliss and ecstasy and a blessed orchard. The word رَوْحٌ means "bliss" and the word رَيْحَانٌ here means "ecstasy." In Sūrah al-Raḥmān, this word has been discussed. The real meaning of رَيْحَانٌ is that of a flower; however, it is also used in what it entails, ie. ecstasy and sweet smell.

وَ اَمَّآ اِنْ كَانَ مِنْ اَصْحٰبِ الْيَمِيْنِ ﴿٩٠﴾ فَسَلٰمٌ لَّكَ مِنْ اَصْحٰبِ الْيَمِيْنِ ﴿٩١﴾[39]

If the person is from among the companions of the right hand, he will receive praise from God and His angels: O one from the companions of the right hand! For you is peace and congratulations.

The word مِنْ in فَسَلٰمٌ لَّكَ مِنْ اَصْحٰبِ الْيَمِيْنِ does not occur as a preposition as has been generally understood by our exegetes. It occurs as an explanation of the pronoun of address in لَّكَ. For this reason, in my opinion, following is an incorrect translation of

38. Thus, if he is from among the favoured ones, for him is bliss and ecstasy and a garden of delight.

39. And if he is from among the companions of the right hand, the peace be to you O companion of the right hand.

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the second verse: "Peace be to you from the companions of the right hand." The correct translation would be: "O companion of the right hand! Peace be for you." Concealed in these salutations and peace is everything which is mentioned earlier regarding the status of the companions of the right hand.

وَاَمَّآ اِنۡ كَانَ مِنَ الۡمُكَذِّبِيۡنَ الضَّآلِّيۡنَ ﴿۹۲﴾ فَنُزُلٌ مِّنۡ حَمِيۡمٍ ﴿۹۳﴾ وَّتَصۡلِيَةُ جَحِيۡمٍ ﴿۹۴﴾[40]

Mentioned in these verses is the fate of the companions of the left hand. However, they are not mentioned by this title; they are addressed with reference to their real crime الۡمُكَذِّبِيۡنَ الضَّآلِّيۡنَ (the rejecters and the misled) so that besides their fate, their crime is also delineated, and so that this crime is fully associated with the misguided and rejecters of the Quraysh. Earlier in verses 51-54, the Quraysh are addressed and told: فَشٰرِبُوۡنَ عَلَيۡهِ مِنَ الۡحَمِيۡمِ ﴿۵۴﴾ فَشٰرِبُوۡنَ شُرۡبَ الۡهِيۡمِ ﴿۵۵﴾ هٰذَا نُزُلُهُمۡ يَوۡمَ الدِّيۡنِ ﴿۵۶﴾. This same thing is stated here in a concise manner. I have already explained the difference between الضَّآلُّوۡنَ and الۡمُكَذِّبُوۡنَ.

It is evident from the words وَّتَصۡلِيَةُ جَحِيۡمٍ ﴿۹۴﴾ فَنُزُلٌ مِّنۡ حَمِيۡمٍ ﴿۹۳﴾ that the very first nourishment they will be greeted with will be boiling water. After that, they will be flung into the real torment of Hell.

اِنَّ هٰذَا لَهُوَ حَقُّ الۡيَقِيۡنِ ﴿۹۵﴾ فَسَبِّحۡ بِاسۡمِ رَبِّكَ الۡعَظِيۡمِ ﴿۹۶﴾[41]

These verses urge the Prophet (sws) to exercise patience and perseverance and they assure him. He is told that whatever has been mentioned earlier are certain facts. There is no possibility of any doubt in them. If the people of his nation refuse to believe in them, then he should leave them to themselves and glorify the Almighty. I have already explained the background and meaning of the word تَسۡبِيۡحٌ (glorification) under verse seventy four.

With these lines, I come to the end of this *sūrah's* exegesis. فَالۡحَمۡدُ لِلّٰهِ عَلٰى اِحۡسَانِهٖ (so, gratitude be to God for His favours).

Raḥmānābād,
24th October, 1977 AD
11th Dhū al-Qa'dah, 1397 AH

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40. And if he is from those who have denied and has been led astray, then for him is the feast of scalding water and entry to Hell.

41. Indeed all these things are true and inevitable. Glorify then, the name of your Lord, the Supreme One.

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Tadabbur i Qur’ān

Sūrah al-Ḥadīd (57)

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Sūrah al-Ḥadīd

This *sūrah* is the counterpart of Sūrah al-Wāqi'ah, the previous *sūrah*. Though both *sūrahs* are separated by both the time and period of revelation since this *sūrah* is Madīnan and the previous one is Makkan, however, both are deeply related to one another as far as their meanings are concerned. In the previous *sūrah*, the principle reality is explained that the Day of Judgement is bound to come, and when it comes mankind will be divided into three groups. One group will consist of the al-*sābiqūn al-awwālūn*, the second of the *aṣḥāb al-yamīn* and the third of the *aṣḥāb al-shimāl*.

In this *sūrah*, Muslims are urged to become part of the *sābiqūn al-awwālūn*, and the methodology spelled out to achieve this is that those who fight and spend in the way of God before the conquest of Makkah will be counted among the *sābiqūn al-awwālūn*, and their status will be greater than those who will fight and spend in the way of God after this conquest. Though splendid is the promise of God with both, yet the difference between the two is evident as far as attaining the nearness of God is concerned. In this regard, those Muslims are urged to spend and fight in the way of God who though had embraced Islam were weak in fulfilling its demands as they were not fully aware of the requirements of faith. They are warned that if by getting entangled in the love of this world they lose the determination to obtain the eternal kingdom of the Hereafter, then they should remember that like the Jews their hearts too will be hardened and they will meet a similar fate.

Besides this relationship between the two *sūrahs* with regard to their meaning, there is also an apparent relationship between the two. The previous *sūrah* ended on the words فَسَبِّحْ بِاسْمِ رَبِّكَ الْعَظِيْمِ while this *sūrah* begins with the words سَبَّحَ لِلّٰهِ مَا فِي السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ. In other words, the last verse of the previous *sūrah* dovetails into the first verse of this *sūrah* nicely connecting the two together. Examples of such an exquisite relationship can also be seen in previous *sūrahs*, and this is a clear indication of the Qur'ān being a coherent and well-knitted book.

Analysis of the Discourse

Verses (1-6): In the introductory part of the *sūrah*, a comprehensive reference is made to the attributes of Wisdom, Power, Knowledge, Authority, Origination and Administration of the Almighty in order to highlight that someone possessing these attributes will be the one towards whom every one will turn on the Day of Judgement; therefore, it is befitting that only He should be praised and glorified. Everything

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within this Universe is glorifying Him and this act of theirs invites mankind to worship Him only and not associate others with Him in it.

Verses (7-10): A warning is sounded to the Muslims in general and those among them having a weak faith in particular that they should fulfil the requisites of the covenant of "to listen and obey" they had pledged at the hands of the Prophet (sws) with all the spirit and determination they can muster. It is the self-evident requirement of their faith to respond positively to waging war and spending in the way God which the Prophet (sws) is today calling them to. It is this attitude which shall bring them towards light from darkness. Those who today spend and fight in the way of God shall have a higher status than those who would do so after the conquest of Makkah, though they too shall be rewarded by the Almighty.

Verses (11-15): Those who shall spend in the way of God with purity of purpose shall find that their spending has manifested itself into a radiant light which shall guide them to Paradise. Those who will not spend in the way of God because of hypocrisy shall be deprived of this light. These people will ask the believers to let them also benefit from its radiance. The believers shall reply that they have lost the opportunity to do so by their behaviour in the previous world and they shall not receive it now whatsoever. After this exchange of dialogue, a wall shall be erected between the two, on one side of which will be the blessings of God and on the other side will be His blazing torment.

Verses (16-17): The hypocrites are warned that even after seeing such manifest signs of the supremacy of Islam, if they do not open their eyes and show hesitation and refrain from spending in the way of God, they shall become hardhearted like the Jews before them and meet a similar fate. They are reminded that the Day of Reckoning is certain to come; neither should they become indifferent to its reward nor unafraid of its punishment.

Verses (18-19): Those who spend in the way of God and fight for His cause should rest assured that the Almighty shall value their sacrifices; in fact, they shall be rewarded many times for each sacrifice they make. It is this fighting and spending in God's way which shall entitle them to become *shuhadā'* and *ṣiddiqīn* and they shall also be rewarded the radiant light from which the hypocrites shall remain deprived.

Verses (20-21): Sorrow is expressed over the timid and unenterprising attitude of the people who have given their hearts to the transitory pleasures of this world and have forgotten the mercy of their Lord as well as the Paradise which is as vast as the vastness of the heavens and the earth.

Verses (22-24): A reminder is sounded that a person's opulence or poverty does not depend on his own schemes and plans but on the fate which has been divinely ordained for him. The correct attitude, therefore, is that a person, whether he is in ease or in difficulty, should surrender to the will of the Almighty. If he has been blessed with wealth, he should not hesitate to spend it in the way of God. He should be aware that just as the Almighty can bless a person with something, He can also deprive him

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of it whenever He wants.

Verses (25-27): A refutation is made of the claim of the people who on the basis of the concept of *rahbāniyyah* (asceticism) regard fighting and spending in the way of God as mundane activities and condemn the spirit of *jihād* of the Muslims. By referring to history of prophets and messengers, it is shown that *jihād* has remained the Sunnah of the Prophets and *rahbāniyyah* is a religious innovation of the Christians; it is the result of their transgressing the bounds of their religion. The Prophet Jesus (sws) never taught it.

Verses (28-29): Muslims are urged to selflessly answer the call of *jihād* made by the Prophet (sws) and spend magnanimously for this cause. They are told that they should pay no heed to the evil suggestions of the wicked among the People of the Book who are saying that *jihād* is a mundane undertaking. The prophets have always undertaken *jihād* to establish justice and equity and the Muslims must follow the path of the prophets. The *rahbāniyyah* invented by the Christians is something which had no place in the real teachings of the Prophet Jesus (sws). They are just showing their malice towards the Muslims – but against their wishes, the Almighty shall reward the Muslims according to the fate He has destined for them.

Section I: (Verses 1-6)

Text and Translation

بِسۡمِ اللّٰہِ الرَّحۡمٰنِ الرَّحِیۡمِ

سَبَّحَ لِلّٰہِ مَا فِی السَّمٰوٰتِ وَ الۡاَرۡضِ ۚ وَ ہُوَ الۡعَزِیۡزُ الۡحَکِیۡمُ ﴿۱﴾ لَہٗ مُلۡکُ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَ الۡاَرۡضِ ۚ یُحۡیٖ وَ یُمِیۡتُ ۚ وَ ہُوَ عَلٰی کُلِّ شَیۡءٍ قَدِیۡرٌ ﴿۲﴾ ہُوَ الۡاَوَّلُ وَ الۡاٰخِرُ وَ الظَّاہِرُ وَ الۡبَاطِنُ ۚ وَ ہُوَ بِکُلِّ شَیۡءٍ عَلِیۡمٌ ﴿۳﴾ ہُوَ الَّذِیۡ خَلَقَ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَ الۡاَرۡضَ فِیۡ سِتَّۃِ اَیَّامٍ ثُمَّ اسۡتَوٰی عَلَی الۡعَرۡشِ ؕ یَعۡلَمُ مَا یَلِجُ فِی الۡاَرۡضِ وَ مَا یَخۡرُجُ مِنۡہَا وَ مَا یَنۡزِلُ مِنَ السَّمَآءِ وَ مَا یَعۡرُجُ فِیۡہَا ؕ وَ ہُوَ مَعَکُمۡ اَیۡنَ مَا کُنۡتُمۡ ؕ وَ اللّٰہُ بِمَا تَعۡمَلُوۡنَ بَصِیۡرٌ ﴿۴﴾ لَہٗ مُلۡکُ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَ الۡاَرۡضِ ؕ وَ اِلَی اللّٰہِ تُرۡجَعُ الۡاُمُوۡرُ ﴿۵﴾ یُوۡلِجُ الَّیۡلَ فِی النَّہَارِ وَ یُوۡلِجُ النَّہَارَ فِی الَّیۡلِ ؕ وَ ہُوَ عَلِیۡمٌۢ بِذَاتِ الصُّدُوۡرِ ﴿۶﴾

In the name of God, the Most gracious, the Ever Merciful

All that is in the heavens and the earth gives glory to God only. And He is the Mighty, the Wise one. It is He Who has sovereignty over the heavens and the earth. He alone ordains life and death, and has power over all things. He is the First and also the Last, the Apparent and also the Hidden and He has knowledge of all things. (1-3)

It was He who created the heavens and the earth in six days, and then mounted the throne. He knows all that goes into the earth and all that emerges from it and all that

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descends from the heavens and all that ascends in it. And He is with you wherever you are, and watches all that you do. To Him belongs the sovereignty of the heavens and the earth and to God shall all things return. (4-5)

He makes the night pass into the day, and the day pass into the night. And He has knowledge of the secrets of hearts. (6)

Explanation

سَبَّحَ لِلّٰهِ مَا فِي السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ ۚ وَهُوَ الْعَزِيْزُ الْحَكِيْمُ ۝[1]

I have explained the word تَسْبِيْح (*tasbīḥ*) a number of times in this exegesis. It purges the being for whom it is spoken from all evil attributes and also connotes worship. This can be through both words and deeds. Exalting God through the tongue is also تَسْبِيْح and offering the prayer and standing, kneeling and prostrating before Him is also تَسْبِيْح. It has various forms. Every object of this universe does *tasbīḥ* of God in some way or the other. So much so, the Qur'ān has also mentioned the fact that people who do not willing do it, are forced to do it in the sphere where they cannot exercise their free will. Consequently, on this basis, people are asked not to create disharmony between their spheres of freedom and spheres of compulsion. This point has been explained at an appropriate place earlier.

Wherever the Qur'ān has referred to the *tasbīḥ* of all objects of the universe, it is generally done so for three purposes:

Firstly, to remind people of the fact that when every small and big thing of this universe acknowledges the right of their Lord over them and does His *tasbīḥ*, then this right is even more established in the case of man that he does *tasbīḥ* of his Lord. The reason for this is that God made him the best of all his creatures and blessed him with His *khilāfah*.

Secondly, to encourage the believers to discharge this right so that they do not despair and lose hope when they see that the majority of this world consists of ingrates. If there are few among mankind who recognize the right of God over them, then this is something which should not cause despair and depression. All the rest of the universe is zealously doing *tasbīḥ* and glorification of God. He who treads this path is not alone; in fact, caravans and caravans of people tread this path.

Thirdly, to express indifference to who those desist from God's worship in spite of being reminded, and to tell them that if they do not do *tasbīḥ* of God, then God does not need it. Every object is doing *tasbīḥ*; if some unfortunate among men are desisting from it, they are not harming God in any way; they are harming their own selves.

At some instances, all these three purposes are implied, and some others one or two of them. They can easily be distinguished. If the strand of sequence of the discourse is

1. All that is in the heavens and the earth gives glory to God only. And He is the Mighty, the Wise one.

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fully kept in consideration, this distinction can easily made by the one who deliberates on it.

The implication of the words وَهُوَ الْعَزِيْزُ الْحَكِيْمُ is that since God is الْعَزِيْزُ and is الْحَكِيْمُ, for this reason, it is befitting that only He be worshipped and His *tasbīḥ* be done. The attribute الْعَزِيْزُ means that He is dominant over everyone and has all the authority and that there is no one beyond His control; no one can prevail over Him or dominate Him. At the same time, God is also الْحَكِيْمُ. Hence each and every action of His is based on wisdom and justice. It is not that He can exercise power in any way He wants to whether this has any wisdom and purpose behind it or not. This universe is a very small product of His power. It bears witness from its very existence that its creator prevails over everyone and there is immense wisdom in all that He does. It is this wisdom of His which entails that He bring about a day in which those people be rewarded who led their lives within the limits set forth by Him, and those punished who exceeded these limits. If He does not do this, then this is against His honour and power, and if He does not do this in spite of being able to, then this is against His wisdom, mercy and justice. Without this, this world becomes a meaningless existence and a playground of children, and it is against the majesty of a powerful and wise being to create something so stupendous without any purpose merely for merriment.

لَهٗ مُلْكُ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ ۚ يُحْيٖ وَيُمِيْتُ ۚ وَهُوَ عَلٰى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيْرٌ ۝٢[2]

The implication of this verse is that the kingdom of the heavens and the earth is in God's hands. No one is His partner in administering it so that he may interfere in any way. He it is Who gives life and death. When this is so, then how can someone be His partner in administering this kingdom.

The implication of the words وَهُوَ عَلٰى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيْرٌ is that there is nothing beyond His power that He may need a helper. Each and every part of His kingdom is under His jurisdiction only and governed by Him alone. He can do anything He likes through His command of *kun*.

هُوَ الْاَوَّلُ وَالْاٰخِرُ وَالظَّاهِرُ وَالْبَاطِنُ ۚ وَهُوَ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيْمٌ ۝٣[3]

After a mention of the extent of His power, mentioned here is the extent of His knowledge. He is the First and Last: when there was nothing, He existed and when nothing will remain, He alone will exist. He initiated everything and to Him will everything return.

The Prophet (sws) has explained the words وَالظَّاهِرُ وَالْبَاطِنُ thus: أَنْتَ الظَّاهِرُ فَلَيْسَ فَوْقَكَ شَيْءٌ وَأَنْتَ

2. It is He Who has sovereignty over the heavens and the earth. He alone ordains life and death, and has power over all things.

3. He is the First and also the Last, the Apparent and also the Hidden and He has knowledge of all things.

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الْبَاطِنُ فَلَيْسَ دُونَكَ شَيْءٌ (You are apparent; nothing is above You. You are Hidden and nothing is below You).[4] In verse thirteen, these words have been used to connote "inside and outside" ie. the knowledge of God embraces everything inside and outside.

The words وَهُوَ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمٌ summarize the whole issue in the form of a principle: He is aware of everything; the hidden and the concealed are equally in His knowledge.

هُوَ الَّذِيْ خَلَقَ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَ الْاَرْضَ فِيْ سِتَّةِ اَيَّامٍ ثُمَّ اسْتَوٰى عَلَى الْعَرْشِ ؕ يَعْلَمُ مَا يَلِجُ فِي الْاَرْضِ وَ مَا يَخْرُجُ مِنْهَا وَ مَا يَنْزِلُ مِنَ السَّمَآءِ وَ مَا يَعْرُجُ فِيْهَا ؕ وَ هُوَ مَعَكُمْ اَيْنَ مَا كُنْتُمْ ؕ وَ اللّٰهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُوْنَ بَصِيْرٌ ۝[5]

Mentioned here are further details of God's all-embracing knowledge and wisdom: He created the heavens and the earth in six days, and after creating them, He did not isolate Himself in some corner after delegating their administration to others. He Himself is governing them by being stationed on His throne. The word "throne" refers to the reins of power. I have explained that "six days" refers to the days of God and not to our days.

Wherever in the Qur'ān the six-day creation of the heavens and the earth is mentioned, the purpose is to direct attention to the elaborate arrangement made by the Almighty in creating them. After this, the inference is made that what is created by God in such an elaborate and thorough manner, how will He become indifferent to their affairs and not show concern on its good and evil and why would He remain silent as a spectator on whatever mischief and excesses people may indulge in. If He does so, then this will only mean that He has made this universe as an amusement in which He made elaborate arrangements but it has no purpose.

The words يَعْلَمُ مَا يَلِجُ فِي الْاَرْضِ وَ مَا يَخْرُجُ مِنْهَا وَ مَا يَنْزِلُ مِنَ السَّمَآءِ وَ مَا يَعْرُجُ فِيْهَا ؕ وَ هُوَ مَعَكُمْ اَيْنَ مَا كُنْتُمْ ؕ وَ اللّٰهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُوْنَ بَصِيْرٌ explain that He is running the affairs of His dominion very alertly and minutely: He knows whatever enters the earth and whatever comes out of it; He is also aware of what descends from the heavens and what ascends towards it. He is with every person wherever he is and watched whatever they do.

لَهٗ مُلْكُ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَ الْاَرْضِ ؕ وَ اِلَى اللّٰهِ تُرْجَعُ الْاُمُوْرُ ۝[6]

The implication is that not only is the Almighty aware of everything, He is

4. Abū Ḥātim Muḥammad ibn Ḥibbān al-Bustī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 2nd ed., vol. 3 (Beirut: Mu'assasah al-risālah, 1993), 246, (no. 966).

5. It was He who created the heavens and the earth in six days, and then mounted the throne. He knows all that goes into the earth and all that emerges from it and all that descends from the heavens and all that ascends in it. And He is with you wherever you are, and watches all that you do.

6. To Him belongs the sovereignty of the heavens and the earth and to God shall all things return.

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practically the fountainhead and source of all affairs. All matters are initiated at His behest, and their report is presented before Him alone. His taskforce turns to Him for all directives, and present their performance report before Him only. Neither is anyone authorized to do anything at his own discretion nor is anyone immune from being accountable before Him.

يُوْلِجُ الَّيْلَ فِي النَّهَارِ وَيُوْلِجُ النَّهَارَ فِي الَّيْلِ ۭ وَهُوَ عَلِيْمٌۢ بِذَاتِ الصُّدُوْرِ ۝[7]

The verse points out that the cycle of day and night is not going on of its own accord. No one else except God is governing it. He alone inserts and takes out the day into the night and night into the day; both enthusiastically follow each other.

The implication of the words وَاللّٰهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُوْنَ بَصِيْرٌ is that when He alone brings the light of the day and the darkness of the night and He brings forth the light of the day to disperse the all-embracing darkness and unveils everything covered by it, so how can anything remain hidden from Him? He is fully aware of the most concealed secrets and is even aware of the secrets of the hearts.

Section II: Verses (7-15)

In the next section of verses, those Muslims are addressed who had formally embraced faith and had pledged the covenant of "to listen and to obey;" however, when the time came for waging war and spending for the cause of God, they failed to fulfill the requisites of faith. Such weak Muslims are informed that they should assess their own character in the light of God's attributes, and fulfil the requisites of the faith they have embraced. Today, if they want to be counted among the foremost to Islam, they can do so by responding to the calls of the Prophet (sws) regarding waging war and spending for the cause of God; otherwise, they should remember that their fate will be like that of the hypocrites, and the opportunity they lose today, will never come to their disposal again.

Text and Translation

اٰمِنُوْا بِاللّٰهِ وَرَسُوْلِهٖ وَاَنْفِقُوْا مِمَّا جَعَلَكُمْ مُّسْتَخْلَفِيْنَ فِيْهِ ۭ فَالَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا مِنْكُمْ وَاَنْفَقُوْا لَهُمْ اَجْرٌ كَبِيْرٌ ۝ وَمَا لَكُمْ لَا تُؤْمِنُوْنَ بِاللّٰهِ ۚ وَالرَّسُوْلُ يَدْعُوْكُمْ لِتُؤْمِنُوْا بِرَبِّكُمْ وَقَدْ اَخَذَ مِيْثَاقَكُمْ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ مُّؤْمِنِيْنَ ۝ هُوَ الَّذِيْ يُنَزِّلُ عَلٰي عَبْدِهٖٓ اٰيٰتٍۢ بَيِّنٰتٍ لِّيُخْرِجَكُمْ مِّنَ الظُّلُمٰتِ اِلَى النُّوْرِ ۭ وَاِنَّ اللّٰهَ بِكُمْ لَرَءُوْفٌ رَّحِيْمٌ ۝ وَمَا لَكُمْ اَلَّا تُنْفِقُوْا فِيْ سَبِيْلِ

7. He makes the night pass into the day, and the day pass into the night. And He has knowledge of the secrets of hearts.

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اللّٰهِ وَلِلّٰهِ مِيْرَاثُ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ ؕ لَا يَسْتَوِيْ مِنْكُمْ مَّنْ اَنْفَقَ مِنْ قَبْلِ الْفَتْحِ وَقٰتَلَ ؕ اُولٰٓئِكَ اَعْظَمُ دَرَجَةً مِّنَ الَّذِيْنَ اَنْفَقُوْا مِنْۢ بَعْدُ وَقٰتَلُوْا ؕ وَكُلًّا وَّعَدَ اللّٰهُ الْحُسْنٰى ؕ وَاللّٰهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُوْنَ خَبِيْرٌ ﴿١٠﴾ مَنْ ذَا الَّذِيْ يُقْرِضُ اللّٰهَ قَرْضًا حَسَنًا فَيُضٰعِفَهٗ لَهٗ وَلَهٗۤ اَجْرٌ كَرِيْمٌ ﴿١١﴾ يَوْمَ تَرَى الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ وَالْمُؤْمِنٰتِ يَسْعٰى نُوْرُهُمْ بَيْنَ اَيْدِيْهِمْ وَبِاَيْمَانِهِمْ بُشْرٰىكُمُ الْيَوْمَ جَنّٰتٌ تَجْرِيْ مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْاَنْهٰرُ خٰلِدِيْنَ فِيْهَا ؕ ذٰلِكَ هُوَ الْفَوْزُ الْعَظِيْمُ ﴿١٢﴾ يَوْمَ يَقُوْلُ الْمُنٰفِقُوْنَ وَالْمُنٰفِقٰتُ لِلَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوا انْظُرُوْنَا نَقْتَبِسْ مِنْ نُّوْرِكُمْ ۚ قِيْلَ ارْجِعُوْا وَرَآءَكُمْ فَالْتَمِسُوْا نُوْرًا ؕ فَضُرِبَ بَيْنَهُمْ بِسُوْرٍ لَّهٗ بَابٌ ؕ بَاطِنُهٗ فِيْهِ الرَّحْمَةُ وَظَاهِرُهٗ مِنْ قِبَلِهِ الْعَذَابُ ﴿١٣﴾ يُنَادُوْنَهُمْ اَلَمْ نَكُنْ مَّعَكُمْ ؕ قَالُوْا بَلٰى وَلٰكِنَّكُمْ فَتَنْتُمْ اَنْفُسَكُمْ وَتَرَبَّصْتُمْ وَارْتَبْتُمْ وَغَرَّتْكُمُ الْاَمَانِيُّ حَتّٰى جَآءَ اَمْرُ اللّٰهِ وَغَرَّكُمْ بِاللّٰهِ الْغَرُوْرُ ﴿١٤﴾ فَالْيَوْمَ لَا يُؤْخَذُ مِنْكُمْ فِدْيَةٌ وَّلَا مِنَ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا ؕ مَاْوٰىكُمُ النَّارُ ؕ هِيَ مَوْلٰىكُمْ ؕ وَبِئْسَ الْمَصِيْرُ ﴿١٥﴾

Believers! Profess faith in God and His Messenger and spend from the wealth He has entrusted you with; thus those of you who embrace faith and spend in charity shall be richly rewarded. And what has happened to you that you are not professing faith in God and His Messenger even though the Messenger is inviting you to profess faith in your God, and He has taken a strong covenant from you, if you are believers? (7-8)

It is He who brings down clear revelations to His servant so that he may lead you out of darkness into the light. And indeed God is compassionate to you and merciful. And why should you not spend in the cause of God when God alone will inherit the heavens and the earth? Those of you who will spend and wage war before the conquest of Makkah, and those who will spend and wage war afterwards will not be equal. These people will have a greater status than those who spend and wage far afterwards. Yet God has promised each a good reward; And God is aware of all that you do. (9-10)

Who will give a generous loan to God so that He may increase it and he shall receive a noble recompense. Remember the day when you shall see the true believers, men and women, with their light moving before them and on their right hands: "Glad tidings are for you of gardens watered by running streams in which you shall abide forever." This is the supreme triumph. On the Day when the hypocrites, both men and women, will call out to the believers: "Please give us the chance to benefit from your light." But they will be told: "Go back, and seek the light there!" Thus a wall will separate them and the believers in which there will be a door. Inside it, there shall be mercy, and outside it torment. They will plead to them, saying: "Were we not on your side?" "Yes," they will reply, "you were indeed so but you indulged in mischief, waited for our turn of fortunes, remained in doubts and were deceived by desires until God's will was done and the Deceiver kept you in deception about God. So, today no ransom shall be accepted from you, or from the disbelievers. The Fire shall be the abode for all of you; it is your place of return and what an evil abode it is!" (11-15)

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Explanation

اٰمِنُوْا بِاللّٰهِ وَرَسُوْلِهٖ وَاَنْفِقُوْا مِمَّا جَعَلَكُمْ مُّسْتَخْلَفِيْنَ فِيْهِ ؕ فَالَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا مِنْكُمْ وَاَنْفَقُوْا لَهُمْ اَجْرٌ كَبِيْرٌ ۝[8]

Though the address in اٰمِنُوْا is apparently general, it will become evident later from contextual indicators that it is directed to a certain category of Muslims and to the hypocrites who though had laid claim to faith in God and His Prophet (sws), but started to evade and desist from its demands of spending and waging war for the cause of God when they arose before them. It is by addressing such claimants of faith that they are told to profess faith in God and His Prophet in the real sense of the word. In other words, the word اٰمِنُوْا is used here in its complete form the way it is in يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْٓا اٰمِنُوْا (O you who lay claim to faith! profess strong faith, (4:136)). Examples of a verb being used in its initial and complete meanings can be seen in the previous *sūrahs*.

The words وَ اَنْفِقُوْا مِمَّا جَعَلَكُمْ مُّسْتَخْلَفِيْنَ فِيْهِ mention an essential requirement and also a very clear and natural reason. The implication is that the obligation a person owes to his faith in God and the Prophet (sws) does not stand fulfilled by merely verbally expressing faith; it is essential for its fulfillment that when they are called to sacrifice their life and wealth for the cause of God, they should positively respond to it. How can those who do not even have the courage to spend their wealth be expected to sacrifice their lives, and what is the of status of the claim to faith of those who do not have the courage to sacrifice neither their wealth nor their life.

The words مِمَّا جَعَلَكُمْ مُّسْتَخْلَفِيْنَ فِيْهِ imply that these people should keep in consideration the fact that they are neither the creators nor the owners of this wealth; God has, in reality, entrusted it to them so that they may use it within the limits He has set forth and be ready to give an account of each and every penny to Him. The implication is that when they are not the creators and masters of this wealth and only its trustees and when a demand comes to them from the very being who has entrusted them with this to wealth to spend it, then why are they showing stinginess in this?

فَالَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا مِنْكُمْ وَ اَنْفَقُوْا لَهُمْ اَجْرٌ كَبِيْرٌ: here the word اَنْفَقُوْا (spend) after اٰمَنُوْا (profess faith) is meant to attest and bear witness to faith. In other words, people who have professed faith attest to it by spending for the cause of God should rest assured that this is a very lucrative deal; God will generously repay them. They will be rewarded ten times; so why should they be apprehensive on making this investment.

Here, it is essential to remember what had been alluded to earlier: the attributes of God mentioned at the beginning of the *sūrah* are effectively a mirror for the people: while keeping them in consideration, people who have laid claim to faith should

8. Believers! Profess faith in God and His Messenger and spend from the wealth He has entrusted you with; thus those of you who embrace faith and spend in charity shall be richly rewarded.

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enhance their moral conduct. It was stated earlier on that God is the First and the Last and everything will return to Him. When this is the reality, then whatever a person has in this world is not owned by him; he is their custodian from God; so when the real owner is God, then what is the sense in withholding His money from Him.

وَمَا لَكُمْ لَا تُؤْمِنُونَ بِاللّٰهِ ۚ وَالرَّسُوْلُ يَدْعُوْكُمْ لِتُؤْمِنُوْا بِرَبِّكُمْ وَقَدْ اَخَذَ مِيْثَاقَكُمْ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ مُّؤْمِنِيْنَ ﴿٨﴾[9]

This verse counsels in a rebuking manner such weak Muslims: when they have pledged a covenant of "to listen and obey" at the hands of the Prophet (sws), then this requires that they follow with letter and spirit whatever directive be revealed by God and whatever call be given to them by the Prophet (sws); however, in actual fact, they are evading the calls of the Prophet (sws) to spend for the cause of God; what type of a pledge and what sort of faith is this. And when today the Prophet (sws) is among them this is the condition of their faith and pledge and he himself is asking them to fulfill the requirements of faith, what will happen later when the Prophet (sws) is no longer among them.

Two things are clearly expressed in this verse:

Firstly, it is an essential requirement of faith that a person profess faith in everything revealed by God and to which the Prophet (sws) called them. Denying any one of them is like denying all.

Secondly, deeds are only a manifestation of faith, and spending for the cause of God occupies special importance in nurturing and strengthening faith. Thus here, for this very reason, the call to spend for the cause of God has been expressed as the call to faith.

The word مِيْثَاقَ (pledge) here refers to the pledge of "to listen and obey" which every Muslim was required to do at the hands of the Prophet (sws). My mentor Imām Farāhī's inclination is that it refers to the pledge mentioned in the following verse:

وَاِذْ اَخَذَ اللّٰهُ مِيْثَاقَ النَّبِيّٖنَ لَمَآ اٰتَيْتُكُمْ مِّنْ كِتٰبٍ وَّحِكْمَةٍ ثُمَّ جَآءَكُمْ رَسُوْلٌ مُّصَدِّقٌ لِّمَا مَعَكُمْ لَتُؤْمِنُنَّ بِهٖ وَلَتَنْصُرُنَّهٗ ؕ قَالَ ءَاَقْرَرْتُمْ وَاَخَذْتُمْ عَلٰى ذٰلِكُمْ اِصْرِىْ ؕ قَالُوْٓا اَقْرَرْنَا ؕ قَالَ فَاشْهَدُوْا وَاَنَا مَعَكُمْ مِّنَ الشّٰهِدِيْنَ. (۳:۸۱)

And when God took a pledge about the prophets: "Now that I gave you the Book and the wisdom and then comes to you a Messenger in confirmation of what is with you, believe in him and help him." He said: "Do you acknowledge this and accept the burden I have laid on you in these terms?" They replied: "We acknowledge it." He said: "Then bear witness and I will bear witness with you." (3:81)

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9. And what has happened to you that you are not professing faith in God and His Messenger even though the Messenger is inviting you to profess faith in your God, and He has taken a strong covenant from you, if you are believers?

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I have deliberated on this, and have been unable to understand it. What is mentioned in the above quoted verse has a different context; it cannot be implied here. On the other hand, my view is corroborated by the following verse of Sūrah al-Mā'idah: وَاذْكُرُوْا نِعْمَةَ اللّٰهِ عَلَيْكُمْ وَمِيْثَاقَهُ الَّذِيْ وَاثَقَكُمْ بِهٖٓ اِذْ قُلْتُمْ سَمِعْنَا وَاَطَعْنَا. (٧:٥) (remember God's favour to you, and the covenant with which He bound you when you said: "we listen and obey." (5:7))

هُوَ الَّذِيْ يُنَزِّلُ عَلٰى عَبْدِهٖٓ اٰيٰتٍۢ بَيِّنٰتٍ لِّيُخْرِجَكُمْ مِّنَ الظُّلُمٰتِ اِلَى النُّوْرِ ؕ وَاِنَّ اللّٰهَ بِكُمْ لَرَءُوْفٌ رَّحِيْمٌ ۝[10]

The verse tells these people that they should not try to run away from the call of spending for the cause of God given by the Prophet (sws). The Almighty is revealing these radiant verses to Him so that He can take you out from the darkness of their evil desires and bring them to the radiance of love for the Hereafter. They should not think that the Almighty wants them to be put through hardships and difficulties. He is forgiving and gracious. He is opening up the path that will lead them to success both in this world and in the Hereafter and not inflicting hardships on them.

The words اٰيٰتٍۢ بَيِّنٰتٍ though refer to all the guidance which people were receiving through the Prophet (sws); however, here specifically those verses are referred to which relate to spending and waging war for the cause of God, and which in part are also mentioned with clear arguments further down in the *sūrah.*

The word الظُّلُمٰتِ refers to the darkness of one's lustful desires and of the love of this world the sole remedy for which is to spend in the way of God and the word النُّوْرِ refers to the radiance produced by spending in the way of God and which is mentioned ahead in verse twelve.

I have already explained the expression رَءُوْفٌ رَّحِيْمٌ at an appropriate place in this exegesis. The first of these attributes implies that God wards off evil and the second implies that God affirms good.

وَمَا لَكُمْ اَلَّا تُنْفِقُوْا فِيْ سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ وَلِلّٰهِ مِيْرَاثُ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ ؕ لَا يَسْتَوِيْ مِنْكُمْ مَّنْ اَنْفَقَ مِنْ قَبْلِ الْفَتْحِ وَقٰتَلَ ؕ اُولٰٓئِكَ اَعْظَمُ دَرَجَةً مِّنَ الَّذِيْنَ اَنْفَقُوْا مِنْۢ بَعْدُ وَقٰتَلُوْا ؕ وَكُلًّا وَّعَدَ اللّٰهُ الْحُسْنٰى ؕ وَاللّٰهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُوْنَ خَبِيْرٌ ۝[11]

This verse urges these weak Muslims to spend for the cause of God and for this purpose states two arguments as motivating factors. The first of them is the same as is alluded to earlier in verse seven: God is the owner of all what belongs to the heavens

10. It is He who brings down clear revelations to His servant so that he may lead you out of darkness into the light. And indeed God is compassionate to you and merciful.

11. And why should you not spend in the cause of God when God alone will inherit the heavens and the earth? Those of you who will spend and wage war before the conquest of Makkah, and those who will spend and wage war afterwards will not be equal. These people will have a greater status than those who spend and wage far afterwards. Yet God has promised each a good reward; And God is aware of all that you do.

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and the earth. Whatever control a person has in this world on various things is temporary as God's vicegerent and trustee. In the end, everything is to return to God. So when a human being leads this transient life while being entrusted wealth by God, then what is the meaning of showing such miserliness? The only right attitude in this matter can be that if he is stingy for his own needs he can be so, but when He who has entrusted this wealth to him demands it, he should generously spend it.

Secondly, a variation in circumstances greatly changes the quality of a deed. At that time, when disbelief and disbelievers prevailed in Makkah (it should remain in consideration that this *sūrah* was revealed before the conquest of Makkah) and the Quraysh were dreaded in Arabia, if people spend for the supremacy of Islam and take part in *jihād*, their status will be much higher before God than those who will do so after the conquest of Makkah when the Quraysh would be humbled. Fortunate are those who take the initiative to serve Islam in these difficult circumstances. In other words, if they are given this opportunity, they should not waste it; on the contrary, they should try to show determination in trying to secure a place among the near and loved ones of God.

It has already been explained in Sūrah al-Wāqi'ah that Muslims who would be counted as the near and loved ones of God would belong more to the early period of Islam when it would become alien among the masses; they would be the ones who would be blessed with the grace of serving Islam with perseverance. Very few people from the later periods would end up in this category. These would be people who would pass through very strenuous trials and achieved some great feat for the cause of religion.

The words وَكُلًّا وَّعَدَ اللّٰهُ الْحُسْنٰى ؕ وَاللّٰهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُوْنَ خَبِيْرٌ mean that great is the promise of God for both. Even after the conquest of Makkah those who made sacrifices for the cause of Islam will have different status with regard to the extent of their services. Whoever will serve Islam with sincerity and good intention will gain reward; moreover, there will be those among them who would be categorized among the topmost. However, the period before the conquest of Makkah is different. Fortunate are the people who recognize its worth and duly benefit from it.

Here the word الْفَتْحِ (conquest) obviously refers to the conquest of Makkah. Some people are of the opinion that it refers to the truce of Ḥudaybiyah, but this truce cannot be regarded as the real conquest; it was only a prelude to the conquest of Makkah. By the word الْفَتْحِ (conquest), the mind instantly jumps to the conquest of Makkah. During this struggle, it was deeply-rooted in the heart of every Muslim that the real purpose of the messengerhood of Muḥammad was to cleanse the House of God from all the filth of disbelief and polytheism and to make evident before the people its true Abrahamic majesty. Consequently, every true Muslim was desirous of this event and was awaiting it. Only the hypocrites because of their spinelessness were hesitant. A mention of this indecisiveness of theirs is mentioned further ahead in the *sūrah* as a reason for their hypocrisy.

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مَنْ ذَا الَّذِیْ یُقْرِضُ اللّٰهَ قَرْضًا حَسَنًا فَیُضٰعِفَهٗ لَهٗ وَلَهٗۤ اَجْرٌ كَرِیْمٌ ﴿۱۱﴾[12]

In very clear and effective words, this verse makes an appeal for financial help regarding *jihād*: who is it who can give a befitting loan to God so that God may increase it and richly reward them. The word loan used here can refer to general spending for the cause of God; here it is evident from the context that it refers to monetary assistance for *jihād*.

The appeal found in the word "loan" used for spending for the cause of God does not need any elaboration. It has become evident earlier that whatever a person has is a trust given to him by God. It is a great favour of the munificent God that when He asks people to spend for His cause the very wealth He had blessed them with, He calls it to be a loan for which He is liable to them to pay back just as a borrower is responsible to pay back what he has borrowed from a money-lender.

The implication of the word فَیُضٰعِفَهٗ is that it is not that the Almighty is demanding loan because of some shortfall in His treasure. When everything has been created and given by Him, how can this question arise? He is only asking for this amount so that the money He has blessed people with is deposited in His bank and is increased manifold so that its profit takes the form of a never ending reward that can be used in an eternal life. The sarcasm this style carries for interest-capitalists is not hidden for those who have a flare for the language. In other words, what is implied is that he who deposits his capital in the banks of this world should know that his capital and everything else is transient; however, the capital a person saves with God will reap eternal profits and will also remain safe and secure with Him.

People have generally translated this word as "two-fold;" this, however, is not correct. It means "to increase." This increase can be two-fold, four-fold, ten-fold and in fact manifold. It depends on the sincerity of the giver and on his circumstances in which he gave it and most of all on the blessings of the Almighty Who has opened the way of eternal profit for His creation.

The word loan is qualified here with just one condition: "a befitting loan." The Qur'ān has explained this term at various places and it is evident from this explanation that it refers to a loan given with generosity and magnanimity and not because of stinginess merely because of compulsion or show; it is given from one's good wealth and not given merely to discharge a responsibility in a trivial manner and most of all it is given merely to please God and not for any worldly interest, and also one does not express one's generosity over the borrower after giving it and also does not cause bother and hurt to others.

The words وَلَهٗۤ اَجْرٌ كَرِیْمٌ imply that whatever increase this wealth will have is just one thing; moreover, the Almighty will bless that person with even more reward out of His

12. Who will give a generous loan to God so that He may increase it and he shall receive a noble recompense.

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grace. An explanation of this is forthcoming.

يَوْمَ تَرَى الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ وَ الْمُؤْمِنٰتِ يَسْعٰى نُوْرُهُمْ بَيْنَ اَيْدِيْهِمْ وَ بِاَيْمَانِهِمْ بُشْرٰىكُمُ الْيَوْمَ جَنّٰتٌ تَجْرِيْ مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْاَنْهٰرُ خٰلِدِيْنَ فِيْهَا ؕ ذٰلِكَ هُوَ الْفَوْزُ الْعَظِيْمُ ﴿۱۲﴾[13]

This is an explanation of one aspect of this noble reward. The implication is that the Almighty will on the Day of Judgement guide people who spent for His cause to Paradise in such a manner that their light will be advancing ahead of them and on their right. In its radiance, they advance towards Paradise. On the other hand, people who would have not created this light for themselves will be left in pitch darkness.

A look at the context of this verse shows that this light will be given to them in return for spending for the cause of God. I have already indicated under verse 9 earlier: هُوَ الَّذِيْ يُنَزِّلُ عَلٰى عَبْدِهٖۤ اٰيٰتٍۭ بَيِّنٰتٍ لِّيُخْرِجَكُمْ مِّنَ الظُّلُمٰتِ اِلَى النُّوْرِ that the words اٰيٰتٍۭ بَيِّنٰتٍ specially refer to those verses which were revealed to explain the importance and exaltedness of such spending. It is such spending which roots out hypocrisy and blesses a person with the radiance of wisdom which guides him in the darkness of this world and will also guide him in the Hereafter.

The word سَعٰى here does not refer to running. This word is used for something being done with zeal and enthusiasm or with vigilance; in fact, it is primarily used in this meaning. Here it is used thus as well. This light will spread in front of them and on their right. Its radiance will not spread on the left so that the companions of the left hand are not able to benefit from it. Succeeding verses mention their deprivation from this light.

These words بُشْرٰىكُمُ الْيَوْمَ جَنّٰتٌ تَجْرِيْ مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْاَنْهٰرُ خٰلِدِيْنَ فِيْهَا ؕ ذٰلِكَ هُوَ الْفَوْزُ الْعَظِيْمُ of glad tidings can be a portrayal of the circumstances and can also be the words spoken by angels. Examples of both these usages are found in the Qur'ān.

The implication of the words ذٰلِكَ هُوَ الْفَوْزُ الْعَظِيْمُ (this is great success) is that if the Almighty has blessed someone with wealth, then the greatest benefit which a person can receive from it is that by spending it for the cause of God create that light in his heart which will guide him in the darkness of the Day of Judgement. All other benefits except this are temporary and transient, and the harm concealed in them is eternal and everlasting. What is meant that if they have the courage, they should spend it to achieve this great success.

يَوْمَ يَقُوْلُ الْمُنٰفِقُوْنَ وَ الْمُنٰفِقٰتُ لِلَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوا انْظُرُوْنَا نَقْتَبِسْ مِنْ نُّوْرِكُمْ ۚ قِيْلَ ارْجِعُوْا وَرَآءَكُمْ فَالْتَمِسُوْا نُوْرًا ؕ

13. Remember the day when you shall see the true believers, men and women, with their light moving before them and on their right hands: "Glad tidings are for you of gardens watered by running streams in which you shall abide forever." This is the supreme triumph.

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فَضُرِبَ بَيْنَهُمْ بِسُوْرٍ لَّهٗ بَابٌ ؕ بَاطِنُهٗ فِيْهِ الرَّحْمَةُ وَظَاهِرُهٗ مِنْ قِبَلِهِ الْعَذَابُ ﴿١٣﴾[14]

On that day, the hypocrites will be wandering in darkness. By not spending for the cause of God, they never created the light in their hearts which could guide them in the Hereafter. When they will see a group of people – people with whom they lived in this world – has the light with them to guide them in this pitch darkness, they will longingly request them to be able to go near them and benefit from their light. They will be told to not make this desire of benefitting from this light and that they should turn back and try to find light there if they can. The implication is that they have left behind the place where they could have obtained this light. The time for that has finished. Nothing now remains for them save longing and being ashamed of themselves. Some people regard this statement to be, God forbid, a trick. This is not so; it is an expression of reality. The place for earning and sowing is this world. He who did not sow virtue in it, will be deprived from everything in the Hereafter.

After this rejoinder, a wall shall be erected between them and the believers which will have just one door. On its inner side will be mercy and on its outer side will be torment. The believers will go to the inner side through the door, and the hypocrites will be surrounded in the darkness of torment. Mention of a similar wall can also be found in Sūrah al-A'rāf. For details, it can be looked up.

يُنَادُوْنَهُمْ اَلَمْ نَكُنْ مَّعَكُمْ ؕ قَالُوْا بَلٰى وَلٰكِنَّكُمْ فَتَنْتُمْ اَنْفُسَكُمْ وَتَرَبَّصْتُمْ وَارْتَبْتُمْ وَغَرَّتْكُمُ الْاَمَانِيُّ حَتّٰى جَآءَ اَمْرُ اللّٰهِ وَغَرَّكُمْ بِاللّٰهِ الْغَرُوْرُ ﴿١٤﴾[15]

When the hypocrites will see that the glimpse of light they had seen has also vanished, and all contacts with those with whom they lived in the previous world were severed, they will plead sorrowfully: "brothers you have totally ostracized us; did we not live with you in the previous world; how can you be so indifferent to your brothers?"

The reply they will get will be: "there is no doubt that you apparently lived with us, but your hearts were not with us and you remained in the temptations from which God wanted to deliver you; you claimed faith in such a vehement manner but you did not have the guts to fulfill the requisites of this faith which kept coming before you; your wealth and lives were dearer to you than God and His Prophet; you were faithful to

14. On the Day when the Hypocrites, both men and women, will call out to the believers: "Please give us the chance to benefit from your light." But they will be told: "Go back, and seek the light there." Thus a wall will separate them and the believers in which there will be a door. Inside it, there shall be mercy, and outside it torment.

15. They will plead to them, saying: "Were we not on your side?" "Yes," they will reply, "you were indeed so but you indulged in mischief, waited for our turn of fortunes, remained in doubts and were deceived by desires until God's will was done and the Deceiver kept you in deception about God.

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the enemies of Islam, and you gave preference to your personal interests in favour of the truth.

The word وَ تَرَبَّصْتُمْ refers to the fact that the hypocrites continuously awaited that calamities and hardships should befall the believers. In Sūrah al-Tawbah, the character of these hypocrites is mentioned in the following words: وَ مِنَ الْاَعْرَابِ مَنْ يَّتَّخِذُ مَا يُنْفِقُ مَغْرَمًا وَّ يَتَرَبَّصُ بِكُمُ الدَّوَآئِرَ. (۹:۹۸) (there are some desert Arabs who if ever spend for the cause of Islam regard it be a fine on themselves and wait for some misfortune to befall you, (9:98)). In Sūrah al-Nisā', they are portrayed thus: الَّذِيْنَ يَتَرَبَّصُوْنَ بِكُمْ ۚ فَاِنْ كَانَ لَكُمْ فَتْحٌ مِّنَ اللّٰهِ قَالُوْٓا اَلَمْ نَكُنْ مَّعَكُمْ (۴:۱۴۱) (whose state of affairs is such that they await defeat for you; however, if contrary to their wishes, God grants you a victory, they run over to you in greed of the war booty and say: "Did we not remain with you?" (4:141)).

The word وَارْتَبْتُمْ implies that the hypocrites remained in a continuous state of doubt and hesitation. They never were convinced of the veracity of Islam and of the Prophet (sws). They had ties – though not deep – with both Islam and disbelief and wanted that they become deep and permanent with the one who finally prevails on the other. It is this mental state of theirs which is referred to in the following words at another place: مُّذَبْذَبِيْنَ بَيْنَ ذٰلِكَ ۖ لَآ اِلٰى هٰٓؤُلَآءِ وَ لَآ اِلٰى هٰٓؤُلَآءِ. (۴:۱۴۳) (wavering between both of them and belonging fully neither to these nor to those, (4:143)).

The words وَ غَرَّتْكُمُ الْاَمَانِيُّ حَتّٰى جَآءَ اَمْرُ اللّٰهِ وَ غَرَّكُمْ بِاللّٰهِ الْغَرُوْرُ refer to the fact that these hypocrites remained entangled in false desires. If the Almighty gave them respite, they wrongly thought that their scheme had succeeded, and that this policy of theirs will remain successful to the end; however, this desire could not be fulfilled. Satan kept on deceiving them and the decision of God to make the truth prevail on falsehood was pronounced, and they had to face this evil day.

The word الْغَرُوْرُ refers to Satan. To deceive people regarding God means that Satan would be able to convince them that the information that was kept on being given to them regarding their fate was mere deception which neither materialized earlier nor would do so in future and that they need not be worried. The information referred to here being that people who strongly adhere to disbelief or find refuge in hypocrisy even after the Prophet of God conclusively delivered the truth to them will definitely be seized by Him.

فَالْيَوْمَ لَا يُؤْخَذُ مِنْكُمْ فِدْيَةٌ وَّ لَا مِنَ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا ؕ مَاْوٰىكُمُ النَّارُ ؕ هِيَ مَوْلٰىكُمْ ؕ وَ بِئْسَ الْمَصِيْرُ ﴿۱۵﴾[16]

The implication is that this situation that they encountered only came after they were fully informed of it and after the truth had been conclusively communicated to them. Thus they now have no way out of it. On this day, neither does a person have anything to give in ransom nor will ransom be accepted from anyone. It will not be

16. So, today no ransom shall be accepted from you, or from the disbelievers. The Fire shall be the abode for all of you; it is your place of return and what an evil abode it is!"

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accepted from these hypocrites nor from the disbelievers with whom they have close ties of friendship. Since they never fully entered the folds of Islam hence in spite of laying claims to it, they will end with the same fate as the disbelievers. Both of them will reside in Hell and this shall be their place of return. In other words, there is no room left for them to beseech and implore before God; no one will hear their pleading. Hell is their abode. Whatever they will have, it will be from Hell and they should remember that it is a very evil abode.

Section III: Verses (16-24)

The succeeding verses are directed at the hypocrites who are addressed in the previous section. Initially, they are warned of their evil fate: if even after seeing such clear signs to corroborate the prophethood of the Prophet, their indecisiveness does not go away, then their hearts will be hardened the way the hearts of the Jews were. It was because of this hard-heartedness of the Jews that the Almighty sealed their hearts.

After that they are encouraged. The purpose is to tell them that they should not get intimidated by the current circumstances and should have faith in the power and mercy of the Almighty. How can it be impossible for the God Who is able to enliven a dead piece of land to give such impetus to the call of the true faith that disbelief vanishes from the land. In this regard, they are also assured that those who spend for the cause of God will never end up in loss. They will receive seventy times reward for such spending, and this is the way for them to enter into the ranks of *ṣiddīq* and the *shuhadā*'.

Next, the transient and ephemeral nature of those things of this world is portrayed which has lured people to such an extent that they have forgotten the eternal kingdom which is as vast as the heavens and the earth which they can easily buy from the pebbles they have collected.

At the end, guidance is given on the all important principle that sorrow and joy, poverty and affluence, ease and difficulty of this world are not dependent on one's schemes. They are dependent on the destiny carved out by God. For this reason, neither is it befitting for a person to become haughty and proud if he becomes affluent nor is it appropriate for him to lose hope and complain on the trials and tests that come his way. On the contrary, he should express gratitude on being blessed with favours and show patience on the trials that he is put through, and in both cases focus his heart's attention to God.

Readers may now proceed to read the succeeding verses in the light of this background.

Text and Translation

اَلَمۡ يَاۡنِ لِلَّذِيۡنَ اٰمَنُوۡۤا اَنۡ تَخۡشَعَ قُلُوۡبُهُمۡ لِذِكۡرِ اللّٰهِ وَمَا نَزَلَ مِنَ الۡحَقِّ ۙ وَلَا يَكُوۡنُوۡا كَالَّذِيۡنَ اُوۡتُوا الۡكِتٰبَ مِنۡ قَبۡلُ

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فَطَالَ عَلَيْهِمُ الْاَمَدُ فَقَسَتْ قُلُوْبُهُمْ ؕ وَكَثِيْرٌ مِّنْهُمْ فٰسِقُوْنَ ﴿١٦﴾ اِعْلَمُوْٓا اَنَّ اللّٰهَ يُحْيِ الْاَرْضَ بَعْدَ مَوْتِهَا ؕ قَدْ بَيَّنَّا لَكُمُ
الْاٰيٰتِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَعْقِلُوْنَ ﴿١٧﴾ اِنَّ الْمُصَّدِّقِيْنَ وَالْمُصَّدِّقٰتِ وَاَقْرَضُوا اللّٰهَ قَرْضًا حَسَنًا يُّضٰعَفُ لَهُمْ وَلَهُمْ اَجْرٌ كَرِيْمٌ ﴿١٨﴾ وَ
الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا بِاللّٰهِ وَرُسُلِهٖٓ اُولٰٓئِكَ هُمُ الصِّدِّيْقُوْنَ ۖ وَالشُّهَدَآءُ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ ؕ لَهُمْ اَجْرُهُمْ وَنُوْرُهُمْ ؕ وَالَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا وَكَذَّبُوْا
بِاٰيٰتِنَآ اُولٰٓئِكَ اَصْحٰبُ الْجَحِيْمِ ﴿١٩﴾ اِعْلَمُوْٓا اَنَّمَا الْحَيٰوةُ الدُّنْيَا لَعِبٌ وَّلَهْوٌ وَّزِيْنَةٌ وَّتَفَاخُرٌۢ بَيْنَكُمْ وَتَكَاثُرٌ فِي الْاَمْوَالِ وَ
الْاَوْلَادِ ؕ كَمَثَلِ غَيْثٍ اَعْجَبَ الْكُفَّارَ نَبَاتُهٗ ثُمَّ يَهِيْجُ فَتَرٰىهُ مُصْفَرًّا ثُمَّ يَكُوْنُ حُطَامًا ؕ وَفِي الْاٰخِرَةِ عَذَابٌ شَدِيْدٌ ۙ وَّ
مَغْفِرَةٌ مِّنَ اللّٰهِ وَرِضْوَانٌ ؕ وَمَا الْحَيٰوةُ الدُّنْيَآ اِلَّا مَتَاعُ الْغُرُوْرِ ﴿٢٠﴾ سَابِقُوْٓا اِلٰى مَغْفِرَةٍ مِّنْ رَّبِّكُمْ وَجَنَّةٍ عَرْضُهَا
كَعَرْضِ السَّمَآءِ وَالْاَرْضِ ۙ اُعِدَّتْ لِلَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا بِاللّٰهِ وَرُسُلِهٖ ؕ ذٰلِكَ فَضْلُ اللّٰهِ يُؤْتِيْهِ مَنْ يَّشَآءُ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ ذُو الْفَضْلِ
الْعَظِيْمِ ﴿٢١﴾ مَآ اَصَابَ مِنْ مُّصِيْبَةٍ فِي الْاَرْضِ وَلَا فِيْٓ اَنْفُسِكُمْ اِلَّا فِيْ كِتٰبٍ مِّنْ قَبْلِ اَنْ نَّبْرَاَهَا ؕ اِنَّ ذٰلِكَ عَلَى اللّٰهِ يَسِيْرٌ ﴿٢٢﴾
لِّكَيْلَا تَاْسَوْا عَلٰى مَا فَاتَكُمْ وَلَا تَفْرَحُوْا بِمَآ اٰتٰىكُمْ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ لَا يُحِبُّ كُلَّ مُخْتَالٍ فَخُوْرِ ﴿٢٣﴾ الَّذِيْنَ يَبْخَلُوْنَ وَيَاْمُرُوْنَ
النَّاسَ بِالْبُخْلِ ؕ وَمَنْ يَّتَوَلَّ فَاِنَّ اللّٰهَ هُوَ الْغَنِيُّ الْحَمِيْدُ ﴿٢٤﴾

Is it not time for those who have professed faith that their hearts submit to God's reminder and to the truth which has been revealed, and to be not like those who were given the Book before this; so a long period passed on them. At last, their hearts were hardened and many of them are disobedient. (16)

Keep in mind that God restores the earth to life after its death. We have made plain Our revelations to you that you may understand. (17)

Indeed men or women who spend for the cause of God and those who give a generous loan to God shall be repaid manifold. And for them is a noble recompense. And those who professed faith in God and His messengers will be among the *siddīq* and the *shuhadā*'. For them, shall also be their reward and also their light. As for those who disbelieved and denied Our revelations, they will be the companions of Hell. (18-19)

Know that the parable of the life of this world – a sport and an entertainment and an embellishment and in the matter of wealth and children a mutual show off and a quest to outdo one another in them – is that of rain whose luxuriant produce lures the hearts of the disbelievers; but then it withers and you see it turn yellow, then turns into bits and pieces. And in the life to come a grievous penalty also and the forgiveness of God and His pleasure also. And the life of this world is but a provision of deception. (20)

Strive to outdo others for the pardon of your Lord and for a Paradise as vast as heavens and the earth. It has been prepared for those who believe in God and His messengers. Such is the grace of God: He bestows it on whom He will and great is God's grace. (21)

And every misfortune that befalls you whether in the produce of the earth or in your own persons is written in a book before We bring it into being, and this is very easy for God. You are being told this so that you may not grieve for things you lose or be

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overjoyed at what He blesses you with. And remember that God does not love the haughty and the proud who are stingy themselves and urge others to stinginess. And those who show indifference should remember that God is self-sufficient and possesses all worthy attributes. (22-24)

Explanation

اَلَمۡ یَاۡنِ لِلَّذِیۡنَ اٰمَنُوۡۤا اَنۡ تَخۡشَعَ قُلُوۡبُهُمۡ لِذِكۡرِ اللّٰهِ وَمَا نَزَلَ مِنَ الۡحَقِّ ۙ وَلَا یَكُوۡنُوۡا كَالَّذِیۡنَ اُوۡتُوا الۡكِتٰبَ مِنۡ قَبۡلُ فَطَالَ عَلَیۡهِمُ الۡاَمَدُ فَقَسَتۡ قُلُوۡبُهُمۡ ؕ وَكَثِیۡرٌ مِّنۡهُمۡ فٰسِقُوۡنَ ﴿۱۶﴾[17]

The words لِلَّذِیۡنَ اٰمَنُوۡۤا, as alluded to earlier, refer to the hypocrites whose behaviour is under discussion here. Since they claimed to be believers, they are mentioned here as believers so that they seriously reflect on the demands of faith which as a result are imposed on them. Moreover, if they think that this claim has some worth, they should try to fulfill the obligations it imposes on them.

It is evident from the words اَلَمۡ یَاۡنِ that this *sūrah* was revealed at the time when the signs of veracity of the call to the true faith and of its dominance had become so evident that those who had any doubts in their minds should have been able to dispel them. Even if after seeing so many signs, their doubts continued to exist, then this only meant that they were not ready to accept Islam from the core of their hearts unless they saw each and every claim it made should come true before their very eyes. Such a faith has no value before God. For this reason, people are threatened that if they still remain entangled in doubts, their fate will be no different than that of the Jews. They too continued to harbour doubts in them, and a lot of time elapsed in this state; as a result, their hearts hardened. Matters reached the extent that no room remained for the truth to be nurtured in their hearts, and the Almighty sealed their hearts, as has been adumbrated in the exegesis of Sūrah al-Baqarah.

It is evident from this discussion that there is nothing wrong about doubts arising on some matter relating to the truth; neither is their existence for some time any matter of rebuke. A sincere person can also face this situation; however, if a person by seeking refuge in these doubts keeps lulling the calls of the truth which arise in him to sleep and makes them an excuse to adhere to falsehood, then as per the established practice of the Almighty, he is deprived of the very ability to accept the truth. The Almighty does not bear for long a person not giving due importance to the truth.

In the expression اَنۡ تَخۡشَعَ قُلُوۡبُهُمۡ لِذِكۡرِ اللّٰهِ وَمَا نَزَلَ مِنَ الۡحَقِّ the words ذِكۡرِ اللّٰهِ and الۡحَقِّ imply the Qur'ān, however, these two terms have been used to direct attention to two distinct

17. Is it not time for those who have professed faith that their hearts submit to God's reminder and to the truth which has been revealed, and to be not like those who were given the Book before this; so a long period passed on them. At last, their hearts were hardened and many of them are disobedient.

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aspects of the Qur'ān. ذِكْرُ اللهِ refers to the warnings which have been revealed to inform them of the dangers and pitfalls these people who are trying to find excuses to evade the truth will necessarily have to face in this world and the next, and الْحَقِّ refers to the principles once again highlighted by the Qur'ān in distinction from falsehood. The verse says that so many signs and indications now exist together to substantiate these principles that hearts of the people should have surrendered before them. If this still does not happen, then this only means that these people are inflicted with the same ailment as the Jews were.

It has been mentioned in earlier *sūrahs* that the Jews were afflicted so much with the malady of harbouring doubts in themselves that in the presence of their prophet while observing his miracles and the signs of God at every step they still remained in a state of incredulity. So much so, this ailment of theirs deprived them of the Torah, and as a result of this very attitude the majority of them were deprived of the Qur'ān as well. Here the hypocrites are warned of this wrong attitude and its fate: they too like the Jews are inflicted with the ailment of doubt and skepticism; this could very well lead them to doom the way it led the Jews to their doom.

اِعْلَمُوْٓا اَنَّ اللّٰهَ يُحْيِ الْاَرْضَ بَعْدَ مَوْتِهَا ؕ قَدْ بَيَّنَّا لَكُمُ الْاٰيٰتِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَعْقِلُوْنَ ﴿۱۷﴾[18]

This verse has come at a very appropriate place, and it refers to two aspects of the remedy of incredulity with which the hypocrites were inflicted.

The most evident aspect is that if a person does not believe in the Hereafter, then sacrificing life and wealth for him is indeed a very difficult proposition. The real ailment which these hypocrites were afflicted with was that they did not have belief in the Hereafter; for this reason, they were regarding the promises of the Qur'ān to be mere deception. In order to remove this state of uncertainty and doubt of theirs, the Almighty directed their attention to the signs and testimonies which He has mentioned in the Qur'ān regarding the Hereafter as a known and observable reality. Here since the objective is only to remind people that the Hereafter is certain to come, for this reason after referring to an obvious argument on its possibility it is briefly stated that arguments in favour of the Hereafter have been mentioned in the Qur'ān; they should refresh them in their minds so that they are able to inculcate in them the courage to sacrifice their life and wealth.

The second aspect is that these hypocrites were very over-awed by the grandeur of the opponents of Islam. They were not able to understand how the highly outnumbered Muslims will be able to fight their huge army and how will it be possible for them to dislodge from Makkah the strongly rooted government of the Quraysh and make it a place of the Abrahamic call as they claimed. Even though in some of the

18. Keep in mind that God restores the earth to life after its death. We have made plain Our revelations to you that you may understand.

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battles fought between the two, Muslims had faired better, the hypocrites were still afraid in their hearts. They were in a continuous state of hopelessness and uncertainty as far as the future of Islam was concerned. In order to rid them of this state of hopelessness, the Almighty directed their attention to the earth as a sign of God: how can it be beyond the God whose grandeur they keep witnessing when He enlivens a dead piece of land to convert the land of disbelief which was Arabia into a place teeming with belief and faith.

إِنَّ الْمُصَّدِّقِينَ وَالْمُصَّدِّقَاتِ وَأَقْرَضُوا اللَّهَ قَرْضًا حَسَنًا يُضَاعَفُ لَهُمْ وَلَهُمْ أَجْرٌ كَرِيمٌ ﴿١٨﴾[19]

This verse expresses from another aspect what is mentioned in verse 11: the hypocrites are urged that spending in the way of God incurs no loss; it is an extremely lucrative deal. Every penny of people lies safe with God who keep spending in the way of God, and when in emergency situations they are appealed for help, they generously do so. He keeps increasing it for them, and will return them in the form of an everlasting treasure. Moreover for them is an honourable reward. In other words, besides being returned manifold of what they spent, they will also receive a great reward as a special blessing of the Almighty.

Here two words have been used for spending in the way of God: *ṣadaqah* (charity) and *qarḍ* (loan). The first is in the form of an adjective (*ism ul fā'il*) and the second in the form of a verb. The reason for this difference is that one type of spending in the way of God is something which is demanded in general circumstances from every Muslim who can spend, and which is an essential ingredient of acquiring purification of the soul. Another type of spending in the way of God is one which is made as a demand from people in emergency situations for the protection and preservation of the Muslims. The first of these is called *ṣadaqah* and for this adjectives and *ism al-fā'ils* are used because it is a permanent requirement. The second of these is called loan and since it is given at the time of need, verbs are used to express it.

Another aspect which needs consideration in these verses is that the Qur'ān has mentioned women alongside men while discussing spending in the way of God to highlight their responsibility as well in this regard. The reason for this is that the wife and the kids are very significant factors which contribute to miserliness and cowardice, and it is these two things which in reality lead a person to hypocrisy. Aḥādīth also mention that the wife and kids become a source of miserliness and cowardice. For this very reason, in this verse the women among the hypocrites are emphatically mentioned alongside the men among the hypocrites and women who spend in charity are emphatically mentioned alongside men who spend in charity so that besides men, women are also clearly told that God will hold accountable each and every person whether man or woman for his or her responsibilities.

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19. Indeed men or women who spend for the cause of God and those who give a generous loan to God shall be repaid manifold. And for them is a noble recompense.

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وَالَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا بِاللّٰهِ وَرُسُلِهٖٓ اُولٰٓئِكَ هُمُ الصِّدِّيْقُوْنَ ۖ وَالشُّهَدَآءُ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ ۭ لَهُمْ اَجْرُهُمْ وَنُوْرُهُمْ ۭ وَالَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا وَكَذَّبُوْا بِاٰيٰتِنَآ اُولٰٓئِكَ اَصْحٰبُ الْجَحِيْمِ ﴿١٩﴾[20]

Contextual and concomitant indicators show that just as in verse seven the word faith (*īmān*) is used in its complete sense, similar is the case in this verse.

In this verse, the hypocrites are being told that the positions of *ṣiddīqīn* and the *shuhadā*' will not be given by God to every person who claims to be a believer. These positions are reserved for only those people who will profess true and strong faith in God and His Prophet and testify with their deeds to their claim to faith. Here since spending in the way of God is specially mentioned, it becomes of its own accord that only people who will spend generously for helping the cause of their religion are truthful in their claim to faith, and it is such people who will be fortunate enough to be regarded among the *ṣiddīqīn* and the *shuhadā*'.

I have already presented my research on the word *ṣiddīq* at an appropriate place in this exegesis. Its real essence is complete harmony between one's words and deeds. In Arabic that spear is called صادق الكعوب whose rings prove as secure in practice as they seem. A person who is called *ṣādiq* or *ṣiddīq* is one who is a man of his words. The foremost sign of this is that he is ready to sacrifice what he earned from his hands for the veracious objective he had declared to adopt. Through this sacrifice, he becomes one who bears evidence to this objective, and it is expected from such a truthful person that if he is put through a trial, he will bear witness to the truth even if he has to sacrifice his life for it. The most prominent person in whom this attribute manifested itself in Islamic history is Abū Bakr (rta). The manner in which he substantiated his claim to faith by spending in the way of God in the most precarious of situations has become the brightest chapter of Muslim history.

The word *shuhadā*' is used here in the same meaning as it is used in the verse: وَكَذٰلِكَ جَعَلْنٰكُمْ اُمَّةً وَّسَطًا لِّتَكُوْنُوْا شُهَدَآءَ عَلَى النَّاسِ وَيَكُوْنَ الرَّسُوْلُ عَلَيْكُمْ شَهِيْدًا (٢:١٤٣) (and similarly, We have made you a balanced community so that you be witnesses to the religion of God before the people, and the *rasūl* be such a witness before you, (2:143)).

The implication is that the great status of *shuhadā' 'alā al-nāṣ* (witness of the religion of God before people) which has been conferred on this *ummah* cannot be given to someone who merely lays claim to faith; it will only be attained by those whose each and every limb bears witness to faith. Here it needs to be kept in consideration that people who die for the cause of God are called *shahīd* because they fulfill the responsibility of bearing witness to the religion of God before people through laying down their lives for it. Since this martyrdom is the greatest witness to

20. And those who professed faith in God and His messengers will be among the *siddīq* and the *shuhadā*'. For them, shall also be their reward and also their light. As for those who disbelieved and denied Our revelations, they will be the companions of Hell.

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the religion of God, hence such a person is called *shahīd*.

This same aspect is highlighted in Sūrah al-Nisā' by addressing the hypocrites thus:

وَمَنْ يُّطِعِ اللّٰهَ وَالرَّسُوْلَ فَاُولٰٓئِكَ مَعَ الَّذِيْنَ اَنْعَمَ اللّٰهُ عَلَيْهِمْ مِّنَ النَّبِيّٖنَ وَالصِّدِّيْقِيْنَ وَالشُّهَدَآءِ وَالصّٰلِحِيْنَ.
(٤٩:٤)

And those who sincerely obey God and the Prophet shall be among those whom God has blessed like the Prophets, the *ṣiddīqīn*, the *shuhadā'* and the righteous. (4:69)

The words لَهُمْ اَجْرُهُمْ وَنُوْرُهُمْ imply that the light and reward which is mentioned earlier in verses 11 and 12 is for such people who are ready to lay down their lives for this purpose.

The words وَالَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا وَكَذَّبُوْا بِاٰيٰتِنَآ اُولٰٓئِكَ اَصْحٰبُ الْجَحِيْمِ imply that all those who perpetrated the crime of denying the truth and remaining in disbelief will go to Hell. The occasion and context shows that this fate shall also befall people who though did not deny from their tongues did not testify by their deeds; in fact, their deeds were in complete contradiction to the claims they made.

اِعْلَمُوْٓا اَنَّمَا الْحَيٰوةُ الدُّنْيَا لَعِبٌ وَّلَهْوٌ وَّزِيْنَةٌ وَّتَفَاخُرٌۢ بَيْنَكُمْ وَتَكَاثُرٌ فِى الْاَمْوَالِ وَالْاَوْلَادِ ؕ كَمَثَلِ غَيْثٍ اَعْجَبَ الْكُفَّارَ نَبَاتُهٗ ثُمَّ يَهِيْجُ فَتَرٰىهُ مُصْفَرًّا ثُمَّ يَكُوْنُ حُطَامًا ؕ وَفِى الْاٰخِرَةِ عَذَابٌ شَدِيْدٌ ۙ وَّمَغْفِرَةٌ مِّنَ اللّٰهِ وَرِضْوَانٌ ؕ وَمَا الْحَيٰوةُ الدُّنْيَآ اِلَّا مَتَاعُ الْغُرُوْرِ ﴿٢٠﴾[21]

This verse reminds and warns the hypocrites who had become slaves to their riches that the life of this world ie a sport and a diversion, the fervency will to embellish one self, the quest for greater riches and more children and the competition of increasing one's standard of life will not lead them to a favourable fate. Its example is exactly similar to abundant rain which refreshes the cultivated land and the ingrates swell with joy on seeing it but later some calamity visits it and it becomes yellow after being withered away and then is crushed to bits and pieces; this same fate will befall all the efforts of such people which they are expending in gaining the pleasures of this world and in outdoing one another in this competition; none of these things will remain.

The implication of the words وَفِى الْاٰخِرَةِ عَذَابٌ شَدِيْدٌ ۙ وَّمَغْفِرَةٌ مِّنَ اللّٰهِ وَرِضْوَانٌ ؕ وَمَا الْحَيٰوةُ الدُّنْيَآ اِلَّا مَتَاعُ

21. Know that the parable of the life of this world – a sport and an entertainment and an embellishment and in the matter of wealth and children a mutual show off and a quest to outdo one another in them – is that of rain whose luxuriant produce lures the hearts of the disbelievers; but then it withers and you see it turn yellow, then turns into bits and pieces. And in the life to come a grievous penalty also and the forgiveness of God and His pleasure also. And the life of this world is but a provision of deception.

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الْغُرُوْرِ is that because of their foolishness they are regarding the attainment of the pleasures of life to be the goal and objective of all their efforts, whereas this world is only a place of deception; the real goal is the Hereafter, and there they will have to face either of the two things: a severe torment and acceptance of forgiveness from God. If a person is not able to win the pleasure and forgiveness of God by sacrificing the avarices of this life, he will necessarily face His severe torment.

In the opinion of our exegetes, the parsing of the verse is that the words اَنَّمَا الْحَيٰوةُ الدُّنْيَا form the inchoative (*mubtada'*) and the rest of the verse forms the enunciative (*khabar*). However, in my opinion, the words لَعِبٌ وَّلَهْوٌ وَّزِيْنَةٌ وَّتَفَاخُرٌۢ بَيْنَكُمْ وَتَكَاثُرٌ فِي الْاَمْوَالِ وَالْاَوْلَادِ which occur after are a permutative (*badal bayān*) and the words … كَمَثَلِ غَيْثٍ are the enunciative of this inchoative. Examples of this style abound in the Qur'ān. For example: لَنَسْفَعًۢا بِالنَّاصِيَةِ. نَاصِيَةٍ كَاذِبَةٍ خَاطِئَةٍ (٩٦:١٥-١٦) (We shall drag him by the forelock, a lying, sinful forelock, (96:15-16)). Thus in the opinion of our exegetes the meaning of this verse is that the life of this world is only sport, embellishment and outdoing each other in the acquisition of wealth and status. In my opinion, the verse means that the parable of the life of this world ie sport, embellishment and outdoing each other in the acquisition of wealth and status is such that …

As per the analysis of the exegetes of this verse, the life of this world in its collective form is something to be hated and condemned and this actually supports the monastic life which the Qur'ān has severely condemned later in this very *surah*. If my analysis is accepted, then it is not this world collectively which has been regarded as condemnable; only that aspect of this world will be regarded as hateful with which the disbelievers and the hypocrites are infatuated and which is instrumental in taking them to Hell.

A deliberation on this verse with regard to the philosophy of religion shows that this worldly life itself is not something condemnable; it is a person's attitude which makes it condemnable or merciful. If a person leads his life within the limits prescribed by God, then this short span of worldly life can become a guarantee for the eternal kingdom of the Hereafter, and if he leads his life in violation of these limits and regards himself to be god and is lost in the pleasures of this life, then it will become eternal condemnation for him. This verse in fact warns us of this aspect of life.

The word كُفَّارٌ (*kuffār*: disbeliever) used in the verse also needs to be deliberated upon. Exegetes generally regard it to refer to farmers (*zurrā'*); however, I am not convinced of this interpretation. The reason for this is that this word is not customarily used for this purpose. What at most can be said is that the root from which this word is made has the possibility of this meaning. However, merely this thing is not enough to regard this word to have such a rare meaning specially when it is used abundantly as a term with a specific connotation in the Qur'ān. Also, there is no other example of this rare usage in the Qur'ān. In the following verse of Sūrah al-Fatḥ, both words are used in their specific meanings: فَاسْتَوٰى عَلٰى سُوْقِهٖ يُعْجِبُ الزُّرَّاعَ لِيَغِيْظَ بِهِمُ الْكُفَّارَ (٤٨:٢٩) (so that the

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cultivated land arose firm upon its stalk, delighting the farmers so that hearts of the disbelievers get agonized, (48:29). This shows that they are distinctly known to have their specific meanings. For this reason, it seems to me that the word *kuffār* is used in its actual meaning. Since in this parable the objective is to highlight the attitude of those who disbelieve in the Hereafter, the verse says that the transient glamour of this world attract the hearts of these people; they get very engrossed in it and ultimately face the torment which such unfortunate people are destined to face. It needs to be kept in mind that at times certain words are inserted in similes and parables which are meant to point to people who are in consideration in them. I have alluded to some of these things. It is important to keep them in consideration otherwise the real beauty of a simile or parable does not become evident. Here by using this word, those people are indicated towards whom the simile is directed.

سَابِقُوْٓا اِلٰى مَغْفِرَةٍ مِّنْ رَّبِّكُمْ وَ جَنَّةٍ عَرْضُهَا كَعَرْضِ السَّمَآءِ وَ الْاَرْضِ ۙ اُعِدَّتْ لِلَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا بِاللّٰهِ وَ رُسُلِهٖ ؕ ذٰلِكَ فَضْلُ اللّٰهِ يُؤْتِيْهِ مَنْ يَّشَآءُ ؕ وَ اللّٰهُ ذُو الْفَضْلِ الْعَظِيْمِ ﴿۲۱﴾[22]

In the previous verse, it was said that all the efforts and mutual competition of the disbelievers to outdo one another in acquiring the riches of life and in being superior to one another is related to the temporary and transient pleasure of this word. They do not have the courage to go beyond this; however, the objective of the believers should be the forgiveness of God and to please Him, and instead of going after the narrow path of this world they should try to outdo one another in taking a place in Paradise – the Paradise whose vastness is equal to that of the heavens and the earth, and which has been prepared by God for sincere believers who have true and strong faith in God and His Prophets.

It is evident from the way the word عَرْض is used here that it refers to "the length and breadth" that is vastness and enormity, and the word سَمَآء refers to the genre or in other words all the skies. Thus this word is used in its plural form in the following verse: وَ سَارِعُوْٓا اِلٰى مَغْفِرَةٍ مِّنْ رَّبِّكُمْ وَ جَنَّةٍ عَرْضُهَا السَّمٰوٰتُ وَ الْاَرْضُ (۳:۱۳۳) (vie with each other to earn the forgiveness of your Lord and a Paradise as vast as heavens and the earth, (3:133)).

The implication of the words اُعِدَّتْ لِلَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا بِاللّٰهِ وَ رُسُلِهٖ is that Paradise should not be considered as something far-off; it has been prepared for those who profess faith in God and His Messengers. As soon as the trial of this world ends, the Paradise of each person will be unveiled before him. One must not express wonder that in reward for the virtue done for a few days God will bless each person with such a vast Paradise. God is very gracious. He can bestow His grace on whomsoever He wills. There is no shortage of things with Him.

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22. Strive to outdo others for the pardon of your Lord and for a Paradise as vast as heavens and the earth. It has been prepared for those who believe in God and His messengers. Such is the grace of God: He bestows it on whom He will and great is God's grace.

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مَآ اَصَابَ مِنۡ مُّصِيۡبَةٍ فِى الۡاَرۡضِ وَلَا فِىۡۤ اَنۡفُسِكُمۡ اِلَّا فِىۡ كِتٰبٍ مِّنۡ قَبۡلِ اَنۡ نَّبۡرَاَهَا ؕ اِنَّ ذٰلِكَ عَلَى اللّٰهِ يَسِيۡرٌ ۖ﴿۲۲﴾ [23]

The message of the verse is that it should be kept in consideration that whatever trials a person will face related to his life and wealth shall necessarily come to him; however much a person tries to save himself from them he will not be able to run away from them. The Almighty has written every good or bad thing that will befall in a book, and no one can change what has been ordained for him. God's knowledge embraces the present and the future and thus bringing about this is not of the slightest bother for Him. People on the basis of their limited knowledge regard it to be beyond the realm of possibility; however, God has created everything. It is a very ordinary matter for Him to write the fate of a creation even before creating it.

It was essential to explain this point here while inviting people to spend for the cause of the Almighty because only those people desist from expending their lives and wealth for the cause of God who wrongly think that whatever wealth they acquire is the result of their own planning, and they themselves can guard the life they have been blessed with. It is to remove this misunderstanding of people that it is said that wealth is a blessing of God, and for this reason it is extreme foolishness to protect it for Him. How can someone save something from someone who has in fact bestowed it upon him? If a person shows stinginess in this regard, then the Almighty might snatch it away from him by sending some calamity. The right attitude for a person in this regard is that he should carry out his obligation and should hope to God that just as He has helped him today, He will rid him of all his difficulties tomorrow as well. At other places in the Qur'ān, a trait of the character of the hypocrites and the misers has been mentioned: they would desist from spending for the cause of God because of the fear of some future monetary need that may arise. In other words, they justified their miserliness to be a remedy for future hardships and calamities; the fact of the matter is that what is going to happen is bound to happen. Its remedy is not to show stinginess before God; the cure lies in spending for His cause and trusting Him.

The words فِى الۡاَرۡضِ refer to financial calamities with which land produce could be affected and the words فِىۡۤ اَنۡفُسِكُمۡ refer to those calamities which a person and his body is afflicted with. The trials which a person faces in this world are generally of these two categories. The verse clarifies that both these types are already destined by God. Thus it is not proper for a person to evade spending for God nor is it proper to try to evade expending his life for the cause of God. He does not have the power to shield these two things from God. At another place in the Qur'ān, these hypocrites are addressed and told that today they are desisting from treading the path of God and fear death; the fact of the matter is that the time of death destined for them is bound to come and

23. And every misfortune that befalls you whether in the produce of the earth or in your own persons is written in a book before We bring it into being, and this is very easy for God.

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even if they hide in strong castles death will find them.

The words فِيْ كِتٰبٍ refer to the fate which God has written for each person. It is also called the guarded tablet and in fact means the knowledge of God.

The words اِنَّ ذٰلِكَ عَلَى اللّٰهِ يَسِيْرٌ imply that man's knowledge is very limited; for this reason, it is very difficult for him to imagine how is it possible to write down before hand every thing which is going to befall each and every person. However, this is no difficult a task at all for God. He is the Creator of this whole universe and His knowledge embraces everything. He knows every phase a person will pass through and the destination he will ultimately reach.

لِّكَيْلَا تَاْسَوْا عَلٰى مَا فَاتَكُمْ وَلَا تَفْرَحُوْا بِمَآ اٰتٰىكُمْ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ لَا يُحِبُّ كُلَّ مُخْتَالٍ فَخُوْرِ ۙ﴿۲۳﴾ الَّذِيْنَ يَبْخَلُوْنَ وَيَاْمُرُوْنَ النَّاسَ بِالْبُخْلِ ؕ وَمَنْ يَّتَوَلَّ فَاِنَّ اللّٰهَ هُوَ الْغَنِيُّ الْحَمِيْدُ ﴿۲۴﴾[24]

Here a part of the discourse is suppressed before لِكَيْ. If this is unveiled, the whole discourse would be something to the effect: on this occasion, you are being reminded of this reality so that you do not express sorrow on something which you lose and neither should you express pride on something you receive; on the contrary, on the basis of this belief, your behaviour should be such that when you are afflicted with some financial or bodily calamity, you show be patient because this was what was ordained before hand for you, and there must be some wisdom of God concealed in this; on other hand, if you are blessed with a favour, you should be thankful to God because He had bestowed it on you; you should not vainly and conceitedly reckon that it is the result of your own planning and capability.

The words وَاللّٰهُ لَا يُحِبُّ كُلَّ مُخْتَالٍ فَخُوْرٍ imply that those who become arrogant and proud after receiving the favours of God should remember that God does not like people who are arrogant and proud. The words "not like" though are apparently soft yet they are very severe as per their meaning. I have explained elsewhere that at times what is said in such a negative statement when expressed as a positive statement would be something like this: إِنَّ اللهَ يَبْغَضُ كُلَّ مُخْتَالٍ فَخُوْرٍ (indeed, God hates the proud and the haughty). In reality, the speaker does not want to say this in explicit words and wants his anger to be understood implicitly through the style and nuance of his words.

The words الَّذِيْنَ يَبْخَلُوْنَ وَيَاْمُرُوْنَ النَّاسَ بِالْبُخْلِ indicate the other aspect of this character of theirs: since such people in their silliness think that what they have is because of their own planning so they think that except for spending on their own show and pomp and on outdoing others in acquiring wealth, spending for the cause of God and for the

24. You are being told this so that you may not grieve for things you lose or be overjoyed at what He blesses you with. And remember that God does not love the haughty and the proud who are stingy themselves and enjoin others to be stinginess. And those who show indifference should remember that God is self-sufficient and possesses all worthy attributes.

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people is a penalty and loss to them. In such cases, they show miserliness and advise others to be misers as well so that they are able to conceal their own miserliness. At some places in the Qur'ān, this aspect of the character of the misers is highlighted: their desire and efforts always revolve around seeing others remain misers like themselves so that no one is able to detect their miserliness.

The word اَمَرَ here means "to give advice," a common usage of the word. In other words, when they see others spending for religious and national causes, as their well-wishers, they advise them not to be so generous and that if they are faced with some financial constraints in future they will regret this spending for at that time there will be no one to bail them out.

The words وَمَنْ يَّتَوَلَّ فَاِنَّ اللّٰهَ هُوَ الْغَنِيُّ الْحَمِيْدُ ﴿٢٤﴾ express disgust and indifference in a very threatening manner to such misers: if even after this reminder and exhortation, these people continue to desist, then they should remember that God is indifferent to them. If He is calling them to spend for His cause, then this is not because there is some deficiency in His treasures; on the contrary, it is because He has given the chance to His people to earn eternal reward, as has been indicated in verse eighteen earlier.

The attribute *ḥamīd* is mentioned with the attribute *ghanī* to show that God is absolutely self-sufficient and indifferent as far as His person is concerned. He needs no one. If He asks from people, then this is not because He is in need of them; it is because He is *ḥamīd*; He wants people to become worthy of His blessings and convert the pebbles they give to Him into pearls and return these to them.

Section IV: Verses (25-29)

Coming up are the last verses of the *sūrah* in which an objection raised by the People of the Book specially the Christians is answered forthwith. The spending for the cause of God to which the believers were urged related to *jihād*, as is evident from the context. As long as the Muslims remained oppressed and prevailed upon in Makkah, the Quraysh and the People of the Book used their helplessness and weakness as an argument of they being not worthy of being followed. However, when in Madīnah, Muslims were able to organize themselves as a collectivity and, in spite of their small number, were even able to convincingly defeat the Quraysh in certain battles, the Quraysh and the People of the Book started to spread propaganda against their spirit of *jihād*. They would say that how can these people be regarded as a religious group when the greatest virtue to them is to shed blood and wage war; what relation do God's Prophets and His pious people have with bloodshed and war? They call people to peace, security, truce and love. In those times, the monastic concept of religion was very dominant in the minds of the people; for this reason the Quraysh took cue from this objection raised by the People of the Book. Thus at the time of the battle of Badr, they taunted the Prophet (sws) that how can he be God's Messenger when he is responsible

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for a brother killing his own brother. The Qur'ān has answered this criticism at various places. Some of its important aspects have been discussed in Sūrah al-Anfāl and Sūrah al-Ḥajj. Here, three points have been made in the light of the history of the prophets and messengers of God.

Firstly, all messengers and prophets are sent by God to guide people to the path of truth and justice. For this purpose, the Almighty revealed His Book so that it may serve as a scale and a barometer for them and by using this scale, they are able to inform people what is true and what is false, what is just and what is unjust.

Secondly, a corollary of the imposition of justice and fairness is that oppression and injustice be put an end to. This entailed that with such Books, power should also be bestowed so that forces who oppose justice can be vanquished. For this purpose, God together with His Books also sent down iron. Among the multifarious benefits of iron for people is that it provides them with the power which is necessary to wage war for the creation of the system of truth and justice. *Jihād* is a trial of God for people: He tests the sincere and the hypocrites through it and sees who among them can lay down their lives for the cause of the truth and who make a pretentious display of being Muslims.

Thirdly, all the prophets and messengers of God from among the progeny of Noah (sws) and Abraham (sws) came for this true purpose and for establishing this system of justice, and for this cause too, the Almighty sent Jesus, son of Mary (sws). The Almighty specially put mercy and compassion in their hearts taking advantage of which the later generations invented monasticism. It was an innovation on their part and had no basis in religion. All that was made obligatory on them was to please God which is a common teaching of all the prophets. However, because of their religious extremism, they did not observe its limits, and distorted the face of religion by inventing monasticism. Now, by finding arguments from this distorted religion they are raising objections on the directive of *jihād* given by Islam.

Since the Christians were the most effected by this *fitnah* of monasticism and had gone astray as a result, at the end of the *sūrah* they are specially called towards Islam so that they who claim to profess faith in Jesus (sws) are not deprived of the great favour of Islam by getting entangled in innovations like monasticism. If they profess faith in the last Messenger of God too, the Almighty as per His promise will twice reward them, and these Jews who think that they have a monopoly on God's blessings and favours will keep burning in the fire of hatred in which they are now burning.

Readers may now proceed to read the subsequent verses in the light of this background.

Text and Translation

لَقَدْ اَرْسَلْنَا رُسُلَنَا بِالْبَيِّنٰتِ وَ اَنْزَلْنَا مَعَهُمُ الْكِتٰبَ وَ الْمِيْزَانَ لِيَقُوْمَ النَّاسُ بِالْقِسْطِ ۚ وَ اَنْزَلْنَا الْحَدِيْدَ فِيْهِ بَاْسٌ
شَدِيْدٌ وَّ مَنَافِعُ لِلنَّاسِ وَ لِيَعْلَمَ اللّٰهُ مَنْ يَّنْصُرُهٗ وَ رُسُلَهٗ بِالْغَيْبِ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ قَوِيٌّ عَزِيْزٌ ﴿۲۵﴾ وَ لَقَدْ اَرْسَلْنَا نُوْحًا وَّ اِبْرٰهِيْمَ وَ

Verses: 25-29

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جَعَلْنَا فِيْ ذُرِّيَّتِهِمَا النُّبُوَّةَ وَالْكِتٰبَ فَمِنْهُمْ مُّهْتَدٍ ۚ وَكَثِيْرٌ مِّنْهُمْ فٰسِقُوْنَ ﴿٢٦﴾ ثُمَّ قَفَّيْنَا عَلٰٓى اٰثَارِهِمْ بِرُسُلِنَا وَقَفَّيْنَا بِعِيْسَى ابْنِ مَرْيَمَ وَاٰتَيْنٰهُ الْاِنْجِيْلَ ۙ وَجَعَلْنَا فِيْ قُلُوْبِ الَّذِيْنَ اتَّبَعُوْهُ رَاْفَةً وَّرَحْمَةً ۭ وَرَهْبَانِيَّةَۨ ابْتَدَعُوْهَا مَا كَتَبْنٰهَا عَلَيْهِمْ اِلَّا ابْتِغَاۗءَ رِضْوَانِ اللّٰهِ فَمَا رَعَوْهَا حَقَّ رِعَايَتِهَا ۚ فَاٰتَيْنَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا مِنْهُمْ اَجْرَهُمْ ۚ وَكَثِيْرٌ مِّنْهُمْ فٰسِقُوْنَ ﴿٢٧﴾ يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ وَاٰمِنُوْا بِرَسُوْلِهٖ يُؤْتِكُمْ كِفْلَيْنِ مِنْ رَّحْمَتِهٖ وَيَجْعَلْ لَّكُمْ نُوْرًا تَمْشُوْنَ بِهٖ وَيَغْفِرْ لَكُمْ ۭ وَاللّٰهُ غَفُوْرٌ رَّحِيْمٌ ﴿٢٨﴾ لِّئَلَّا يَعْلَمَ اَهْلُ الْكِتٰبِ اَلَّا يَقْدِرُوْنَ عَلٰي شَيْءٍ مِّنْ فَضْلِ اللّٰهِ وَاَنَّ الْفَضْلَ بِيَدِ اللّٰهِ يُؤْتِيْهِ مَنْ يَّشَاۗءُ ۭ وَاللّٰهُ ذُو الْفَضْلِ الْعَظِيْمِ ﴿٢٩﴾

Indeed, We have sent messengers with clear signs, and with them revealed the Book and the Scale so that people adhere to justice, and also sent down iron which has great power and other benefits for mankind. And through this, God also wanted to differentiate people who help Him and His messengers while being unseen. Indeed, God is Powerful and Mighty. (25)

And We sent forth Noah and Abraham as messengers and initiated in their progenies prophethood and the Book. Thus some of them were rightly guided, but most of them turned out to be disobedient. Then in their footsteps, We sent other messengers and also similarly sent Jesus son of Mary and gave Him the Gospel, and put compassion and mercy in the hearts of his followers. And as far monasticism, they invented it themselves. We had only enjoined on them to seek to please God; but they did not faithfully observe its bounds. So, those among them who strongly adhered to faith, We gave them their reward and most of them turned out to be disobedient. Believers! Have fear of God and profess faith in His Messenger. He will grant you a double share from His mercy and create for you a light with which you will walk and will forgive you. God is very Forgiving and Merciful. So that the People of the Book do not know that they do not have any control on anything from among the grace of God and that grace is in God's Hands alone. He bestows it upon whom He wills and abounding is God's grace. (26-29)

Explanation

لَقَدْ اَرْسَلْنَا رُسُلَنَا بِالْبَيِّنٰتِ وَاَنْزَلْنَا مَعَهُمُ الْكِتٰبَ وَالْمِيْزَانَ لِيَقُوْمَ النَّاسُ بِالْقِسْطِ ۚ وَاَنْزَلْنَا الْحَدِيْدَ فِيْهِ بَاْسٌ شَدِيْدٌ وَّمَنَافِعُ لِلنَّاسِ وَلِيَعْلَمَ اللّٰهُ مَنْ يَّنْصُرُهٗ وَرُسُلَهٗ بِالْغَيْبِ ۭ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ قَوِيٌّ عَزِيْزٌ ﴿٢٥﴾[25]

Mentioned in this verse is the purpose of sending forth messengers and revelation of divine books: so that people in every walk of life are able to adhere to justice and truth; they are able to adopt the right path in matters of beliefs – the path which is

25. Indeed, We have sent messengers with clear signs, and with them revealed the Book and the Scale so that people adhere to justice, and also sent down iron which has great power and other benefits for mankind. And through this, God also wanted to differentiate people who help Him and His messengers while being unseen. Indeed, God is Powerful and Mighty.

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straight, free from deviancies and is the middle one; similarly, in matters of deeds, – whether they relate to the individual life or to the collective life – they are able to stick to the right path which is free of any trace of oppression and injustice. It is evident from this that the Almighty did not send His messengers to advise people nor revealed His Books that they may be merely recited; the purpose was that people in their guidance were able to adhere to and implement justice and truth.

The word مِيْزَان (*mīzān*) is mentioned with كِتٰب (*kitāb*) to explain the greatest purpose of divine books: they weigh everything and tell us how much of truth a thing has and how much has been wrongly added to it. Sūrah Shūrā has dwelt at length on this aspect of divine books.[26] There, first it has been elucidated that all the Prophets of God instructed people only regarding monotheism, and stopped people from even slightly deviating from it. After that, the Prophet (sws) was directed to call people towards it only and to inform all his adversaries that he had professed faith in the Book revealed by God so how can he follow their innovations; by bestowing this Book on him, the Almighty has set him at the position of a judge and weigh the amount of truth each person has in this scale, and thus also make evident the extent of falsehood each person has. This discussion ends on the following verse:

اَللّٰهُ الَّذِیْٓ اَنْزَلَ الْكِتٰبَ بِالْحَقِّ وَالْمِیْزَانَ ؕ وَمَا یُدْرِیْكَ لَعَلَّ السَّاعَةَ قَرِیْبٌ. (۴۲:۱۷)

It is God who has revealed with truth the Book and which is the scale for judgement; and what do you know that the hour of Day of Reckoning is near [to pronounce judgement]. (42:17)

It is evident from this aspect that the Qur'ān has also been called *muhaymin* which means a scale. By weighing in this scale the truth can be distinguished from falsehood. In order to maintain justice and fairness, both the *mīzān* and the scale are required. For this reason, the Almighty has delineated these two features of the Qur'ān.

The implication of the words وَاَنْزَلْنَا الْحَدِیْدَ فِیْهِ بَاْسٌ شَدِیْدٌ وَّمَنَافِعُ لِلنَّاسِ is that when the real objective behind sending the messengers and revealing the *sharī'ah* is to establish the system of justice, then this objective cannot merely be achieved by counselling and urging, giving glad tidings or warning people; power is essential for it. For this reason, on the one hand, the Almighty sent His messengers with manifest arguments and Books as calibrated scales so that people are conclusively communicated this truth regarding intellectual and moral issues, and, on the other hand, He also sent down iron so that people who are not ready to submit to the truth after this conclusive communication of the truth and are bent upon spreading anarchy in the society for their vested interests are overpowered. Thus, it has remained the established practice of the Almighty that when He sent any of His messengers to a people, then after conclusive

26. Amīn Aḥsan Iṣlāḥī, *Tadabbur-i Qur'ān*, vol. 6, 152-157.

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communication of the truth by a messenger one of the following two situations arose. If those who professed faith in the messenger were small in number and the majority among them were those who adhered to disbelief, then the Almighty destroyed the disbelievers by sending some earthly and heavenly calamity after sifting out the believers from them. On the other hand, if the number of people who professed faith in the messenger were sizeable in number, then the messenger and his companions were directed to wage war against the disbelievers as a result of which the disbelievers were ultimately routed. The history of the messengers of God mentioned in the Qur'ān bears witness to this established practice of the Almighty.

Though iron comes out of the earth, the word اَنْزَلْنَا (We sent down) is used by the Qur'ān. This is very similar to the usage of this word by the Qur'ān for the creation of cattle. The purpose is, on the one hand, to direct attention to the special benefit which is found in it for man, and, on the other hand, this word tells us of the real source and fountainhead of everything: a thing can be obtained from anywhere, but the fact of the matter is that it is from God. Until and unless, a person has this fact fully grounded in his mind, he can never fully assess the value of God's favours.

An important thing to note in this section of the verse is that the word بَاْسٌ is mentioned prior to مَنَافِعُ. It is evident from this that the real significance of iron in the eyes of the Almighty is to provide power and strength for *jihād*. Its benefits which relate to construction and to other spheres of society are secondary and supplementary.

This aspect should also be kept in consideration that here the Qur'ān has mentioned iron as the real and foremost means of war. At that time, most weapons of war would be made by iron. Today, its position has become secondary and some other elements have become more important. In the changed circumstances, these new elements have now assumed the status of iron.

The words وَلِيَعْلَمَ اللّٰهُ مَنْ يَّنْصُرُهٗ وَرُسُلَهٗ بِالْغَيْبِ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ قَوِيٌّ عَزِيْزٌ explain the wisdom of *jihād*: though God Himself is powerful and mighty and can rout the greatest of His enemies in the blink of any eye, He actually tests His people through *jihād* that who among them while not being able to see God still helps Him and His messengers and who among them are mere zealous pretenders who fail this test. The verb يَعْلَمَ, as explained earlier in this exegesis also means to distinguish and to make distinct. God knows everything but through such trials He distinguishes the righteous from the wrongdoers.

وَلَقَدْ اَرْسَلْنَا نُوْحًا وَّاِبْرٰهِيْمَ وَجَعَلْنَا فِيْ ذُرِّيَّتِهِمَا النُّبُوَّةَ وَالْكِتٰبَ فَمِنْهُمْ مُّهْتَدٍ ۚ وَكَثِيْرٌ مِّنْهُمْ فٰسِقُوْنَ ﴿٢٦﴾[27]

This is a reference to the history that all prophets and messengers sent by God were

27. And We sent forth Noah and Abraham as messengers and initiated in their progenies prophethood and the Book. Thus some of them were rightly guided, but most of them turned out to be disobedient.

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sent for the purpose that they call people to impose justice and fairness in the society; however, very few from their progeny adhered to achieving this purpose; the majority deviated from this purpose because of their proclivity to religious innovations and ended up being disobedient.

Only two messengers are mentioned here by name: Noah (sws) and Abraham (sws). The reason for this is obvious that Noah (sws) occupies the status of being Adam the second, and Abraham (sws) is the forefather to all the prophets of the Israelites and the Ishmaelites. It is as if by mentioning these two all the rest have been mentioned. This verse is actually a prelude to the subject raised in the succeeding verse.

ثُمَّ قَفَّيْنَا عَلٰٓى اٰثَارِهِمْ بِرُسُلِنَا وَقَفَّيْنَا بِعِيْسَى ابْنِ مَرْيَمَ وَاٰتَيْنٰهُ الْاِنْجِيْلَ ۙ وَجَعَلْنَا فِيْ قُلُوْبِ الَّذِيْنَ اتَّبَعُوْهُ رَاْفَةً وَّرَحْمَةً ۭ وَرَهْبَانِيَّةِۨ ابْتَدَعُوْهَا مَا كَتَبْنٰهَا عَلَيْهِمْ اِلَّا ابْتِغَاۗءَ رِضْوَانِ اللّٰهِ فَمَا رَعَوْهَا حَقَّ رِعَايَتِهَا ۚ فَاٰتَيْنَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا مِنْهُمْ اَجْرَهُمْ ۚ وَكَثِيْرٌ مِّنْهُمْ فٰسِقُوْنَ ﴿۲۷﴾[28]

This verse says that when all the prophets adhered to the same methodology outlined above, then from where did the innovation of monasticism (*raḥbāniyyah*) and the deviance of regarding *jihād* to be against religiosity arise? All the messengers sent after Noah (sws) and Abraham (sws) by the Almighty followed in their footsteps: all called their people to adhere to justice, and if the need arose they, in accordance with the practice of prophets, even waged *jihād.* None of the messengers adopted a different way to this. To achieve this very purpose, Jesus (sws), son of Mary (sws), was also sent and he was given the Gospel. He had not been sent to teach monasticism (*raḥbāniyyah*) to his people. The only thing was that the Almighty specially made their hearts very merciful and compassionate. By taking advantage of this, the later innovators invented the whole system of monasticism even though monasticism was never made mandatory on them; seeking God's pleasure was what was made mandatory on them. However, they did not observe its bounds and broke the limits of the *sharī'ah* and human nature and went astray.

It is evident from this verse that the innovation of monasticism entered religion through the Christians; however, the teachings of Jesus (sws) or the Gospel or his real successors had no role in this induction: all of it was an invention of later generations.

The words وَجَعَلْنَا فِيْ قُلُوْبِ الَّذِيْنَ اتَّبَعُوْهُ رَاْفَةً وَّرَحْمَةً praises the foremost followers of Jesus (sws): God placed compassion and mercy in their hearts. The purpose of this praise is that these very attributes of theirs became a reason for the later ones in favour of

28. Then in their footsteps, We sent other messengers and also similarly sent Jesus son of Mary and gave Him the Gospel, and put compassion and mercy in the hearts of his followers. And as far monasticism, they invented it themselves. We had only enjoined on them to seek to please God; but they did not faithfully observe its bounds. So, those among them who strongly adhered to faith, We gave them their reward and most of them turned out to be disobedient.

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monasticism. The fact of the matter is that just as Jesus (sws) taught his followers to be merciful and compassionate, every other prophet of God directed their followers to be so. The words used by the Qur'ān regarding Muḥammad (sws) are: حَرِيْصٌ عَلَيْكُمْ بِالْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ رَءُوْفٌ رَّحِيْمٌ (۹:۱۲۸) (one who has greed for your guidance and is benevolent and merciful to true believers, (9:128)). About Muslims themselves, the words used are: رُحَمَآءُ بَيْنَهُمْ (۴۸:۲۹) (they are merciful to one another, (48:29)). In Ḥadīth narratives, the attributes of Muslims mentioned are even more clear. It is reported in them that in mutual sympathy and compassion believers are like limbs of a body. The Persian poet Sheikh Sa'dī[29] has translated such a narrative thus:

چو عضوے بدرد آورد روزگار
دگر عضوہا را نماند قرار

(If circumstances inflict the limb of a body with pain, the rest of the limbs too get affected.)

Mercy and compassion are not against justice and fairness. Consequently, the Almighty has regarded the Day of Judgement – a Day when His justice will completely manifest itself – to be a essential corollary of His attribute of mercy: كَتَبَ عَلٰى نَفْسِهِ الرَّحْمَةَ لَيَجْمَعَنَّكُمْ اِلٰى يَوْمِ الْقِيٰمَةِ (۶:۱۲) (God has decreed mercy for Himself, and will necessarily gather you all on the Day of Judgement, (6:12)). Since the followers of Jesus (sws) did not get the chance to wage *jihād* in his lifetime, hence the later generations used this lack of warfare as an argument in favour of monasticism. The fact of the matter is that had he too gotten the chance of waging *jihād* the way *ummah* of the Prophet (sws) Muḥammad was blessed with this opportunity, he too would have been *ashidā 'alā al-kuffār* (أَشِدَّاء عَلَى الْكُفَّارِ).[30]

The words وَرَهْبَانِيَّةً ِۨابْتَدَعُوْهَا مَا كَتَبْنٰهَا عَلَيْهِمْ اِلَّا ابْتِغَآءَ رِضْوَانِ اللّٰهِ فَمَا رَعَوْهَا حَقَّ رِعَايَتِهَا imply that God did place mercy and compassion in their hearts; however, taking advantage of this, the monasticism invented by later generations has nothing to do with the teachings of Jesus (sws). The word رَهْبَانِيَّةً (monasticism) is declined in the accusative not by the verb جَعَلْنَا. It is because of an understood verb which is indicated by the later verb ابْتَدَعُوْهَا. However, the way monasticism has been mentioned here shows that it was invented because of a good motive; but it was a transgression of the limits set by God. Those who adopted it, in spite of the good behind it, went astray because of their proclivity to religious innovations, extremism and fanaticism.

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29. Abū Muḥammad Muṣliḥ al-Din Sa'di, *Kulliyyāt Sa'di*, ed. Furughi (Tehran: Amir Kabir, 1367 AH), 47.

30. I have explained the established practice of the Almighty regarding *jihād* at many places in this exegesis.

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The words مَا كَتَبْنٰهَا عَلَيْهِمْ اِلَّا ابْتِغَآءَ رِضْوَانِ اللّٰهِ say that the monasticism they had imposed upon themselves was never made mandatory on them by God; it was their own invention. The Almighty had only made it obligatory on them to try to seek His pleasure. Had this monasticism been confined to this only, it would been a boon and blessing for them in this world and in the Hereafter; however, they did not observe its bounds.

The antecedent of the feminine pronoun in فَمَا رَعَوْهَا حَقَّ رِعَايَتِهَا is obviously رَهْبَانِيَّةً evident from which is that the real fault of the Christians regarding monasticism is that they did not observe its limits the way they should have. As a result, many concepts infiltrated into it which were against human nature and intellect. Had they observed these limits, it would not have exceeded beyond what was required of them in seeking the pleasure of God. Seeking the pleasure of God is a teaching common to all divine scriptures, and waging war and *jihād* for the cause of God is the greatest part of this monasticism. In Sūrah al-Tawbah, this reality has been explained thus:

اِنَّ اللّٰهَ اشْتَرٰى مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ اَنْفُسَهُمْ وَ اَمْوَالَهُمْ بِاَنَّ لَهُمُ الْجَنَّةَ ؕ يُقَاتِلُوْنَ فِيْ سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ فَيَقْتُلُوْنَ وَ يُقْتَلُوْنَ ۟ وَعْدًا عَلَيْهِ حَقًّا فِي التَّوْرٰىةِ وَ الْاِنْجِيْلِ وَ الْقُرْاٰنِ. (۹:۱۱۱)

God has purchased from the believers their lives and wealth in return for Paradise. They fight for the cause of God: thus they slay and are slain. This is a promise due on God in the Torah, the Gospel and the Qur'ān. (9:111)

It is evident from this verse that waging *jihād* to please God is a common teaching of all the prophets and messengers of God. It is this very teaching which was given to the Christians in the Gospel because it is repeatedly told in the Gospel that the Torah must be fully followed in cases of divine law. On the contrary, they invented monasticism which lost upon them this very purpose.

Here, it would be worthwhile to refresh a fact to which I have alluded in detail in the exegesis of Sūrah al-Tawbah while explaining the word *sā'iḥūn*.[31] There I have explained that in Islam we find both positive and negative things about *rāḥbāniyyah* and *siyāḥat* which show that they are not evil in themselves. Evil actually arises in them by not observing their limits as the Qur'ānic words allude to: فَمَا رَعَوْهَا حَقَّ رِعَايَتِهَا. Thus Islam has included all those ingredients of *rāḥbāniyyah* and *siyāḥat* which are in accordance with human nature and are in harmony with the objective of pleasing God; it has excluded all those of their components which the innovators had invented and which were in conflict with human nature, and sense and reason. If one reflects on the rituals of worship in Islam, one will find that each of them has the worthy components of *rāḥbāniyyah.* So much so, some narratives regard *jihād* to be *rāḥbāniyyah*.

31. Amīn Aḥsan Iṣlāḥī, *Tadabbur-i Qur'ān*, vol. 3, 246-247.

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It is evident from intrinsic contextual and concomitant indicators that the word اٰمَنُوْا in فَاٰتَيْنَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا مِنْهُمْ اَجْرَهُمْ ۚ وَكَثِيْرٌ مِّنْهُمْ فٰسِقُوْنَ is used in its complete and ultimate meaning ie those among the followers of Jesus (sws) who fully adhered to and persevered on his teachings were duly rewarded by God; however, the majority of them turned out to be disobedient and were duly punished for this attitude.

Here, obviously the words الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا refer to Simon, the righteous and true successor of Jesus (sws) and the Christians who followed in his footsteps and who in spite of all types of circumstances adhered to the true religion. Ultimately, it was the later followers of these people who graciously welcomed Islam when its call was given by the Prophet (sws). The Qur'ān at many places has praised them in a very commendable way.

The words وَكَثِيْرٌ مِّنْهُمْ فٰسِقُوْنَ refer to Paul and his followers who by inventing the innovations of trinity and monasticism distorted the teachings of Jesus (sws) and incorporated in them the deviant and erroneous views of the Romans. Later, it was this "led-astray and leading-others-astray" group which ended up in majority and the adherents to true Christianity ended up in minority.

يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ وَاٰمِنُوْا بِرَسُوْلِهٖ يُؤْتِكُمْ كِفْلَيْنِ مِنْ رَّحْمَتِهٖ وَيَجْعَلْ لَّكُمْ نُوْرًا تَمْشُوْنَ بِهٖ وَيَغْفِرْ لَكُمْ ۭ وَاللّٰهُ غَفُوْرٌ رَّحِيْمٌ ۝۲۸ۙ[32]

Here the word الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوا addresses those very Christians who were mentioned earlier by the words فَاٰتَيْنَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا مِنْهُمْ اَجْرَهُمْ. When the discourse reached their mention, then with their reference those Christians were invited to profess faith in the Prophet (sws) who had within them the radiance of faith. They were addressed and told: "O those who have professed faith in Jesus! fear God and profess faith in His Messenger (Muḥammad (sws)) so that God will grant you a double share from His mercy and create for you a light with which you will walk in the Hereafter and He will forgive you. God is very Forgiving and Merciful.

In Sūrah al-Ma'idah, a group of Christians have been praised thus:

لَتَجِدَنَّ اَشَدَّ النَّاسِ عَدَاوَةً لِّلَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوا الْيَهُوْدَ وَالَّذِيْنَ اَشْرَكُوْا ۚ وَلَتَجِدَنَّ اَقْرَبَهُمْ مَّوَدَّةً لِّلَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوا الَّذِيْنَ قَالُوْٓا اِنَّا نَصٰرٰى ۭ ذٰلِكَ بِاَنَّ مِنْهُمْ قِسِّيْسِيْنَ وَرُهْبَانًا وَّاَنَّهُمْ لَا يَسْتَكْبِرُوْنَ. وَاِذَا سَمِعُوْا مَآ اُنْزِلَ اِلَى الرَّسُوْلِ تَرٰٓى اَعْيُنَهُمْ تَفِيْضُ مِنَ الدَّمْعِ مِمَّا عَرَفُوْا مِنَ الْحَقِّ ۚ يَقُوْلُوْنَ رَبَّنَآ اٰمَنَّا فَاكْتُبْنَا مَعَ الشّٰهِدِيْنَ. (۵:۸۲-۸۳)

You will find the Jews and the Idolaters to be the staunchest in animosity to believers and will find those say: "we are Christians," to be nearest in affection to

32. Believers! Have fear of God and profess faith in His Messenger. He will grant you a double share from His mercy and create for you a light with which you will walk and will forgive you. God is very Forgiving and Merciful.

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them. That is because there are priests and monks among them, and because they are not inflicted with conceit. When they listen to that which was revealed to the Messenger, you see their eyes filled with tears because they recognize its truth. They call out: "Lord! We have professed faith. Count us among the witnesses to the last messenger." (5:82-83)

In the verse under discussion, all the Christians who have any glimmer of faith in Jesus (sws) in them are invited to profess faith in Muḥammad (sws): they should fear God and believe in the messenger giving glad tidings of whose advent had been entrusted to them. They have been directed to fear God because many of the Christians did consider Muḥammad (sws) the very unlettered prophet whose predictions were found in the Bible yet they were afraid that the enemies of Islam would become their enemies too. On this, they are told that they should fear God not people; they should full realize what will happen to them if because of fearing people they become indifferent to the fear of God.

The words يُؤْتِكُمْ كِفْلَيْنِ مِنْ رَّحْمَتِهٖ re-mention the promise made with the true and righteous People of the Book stated in Sūrah al-Qaṣaṣ. It was stated there that those among them who fully adhered to their own religion and when in accordance with the predictions mentioned in their scriptures the last messenger of God came to them, they bore witness to his veracity, they shall be rewarded twice. The reason for this is that they had to pass through two trials while bearing witness to the truth. The words are:

اَلَّذِيْنَ اٰتَيْنٰهُمُ الْكِتٰبَ مِنْ قَبْلِهٖ هُمْ بِهٖ يُؤْمِنُوْنَ. وَ اِذَا يُتْلٰى عَلَيْهِمْ قَالُوْٓا اٰمَنَّا بِهٖٓ اِنَّهُ الْحَقُّ مِنْ رَّبِّنَآ اِنَّا كُنَّا مِنْ قَبْلِهٖ مُسْلِمِيْنَ. اُولٰٓئِكَ يُؤْتَوْنَ اَجْرَهُمْ مَّرَّتَيْنِ بِمَا صَبَرُوْا وَ يَدْرَءُوْنَ بِالْحَسَنَةِ السَّيِّئَةَ وَ مِمَّا رَزَقْنٰهُمْ يُنْفِقُوْنَ. (٢٨: ٥٢-٥٤)

To whom we gave the Book before [this Qur'ān] will become among the believers of this [Qur'ān]. And when it is recited to them, they say: "We believe in it; it is the truth from our Lord, and We have continued to acknowledge it long before it came." It is these people who will be rewarded twice because they persevered and responded to the hardships inflicted by people with kind behaviour and spent for the cause of God what We gave them. (28:52-54)

In the exegesis of Sūrah al-Qaṣaṣ, I had explained that the words اَلَّذِيْنَ اٰتَيْنٰهُمُ الْكِتٰبَ refer to the true People of the Book, in particular that group of Christians whose love for the truth and fear of God is mentioned in the above quoted verse of Sūrah al-Mā'idah.

It needs to be understood here that the People of the Book will receive double reward not because of being People of the Book. It would be because they bore witness to the truth revealed to Jesus (sws) and the previous prophets and to the truth revealed to

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Muḥammad (sws), the unlettered prophet. Since this *ummah* is required to bear witness without any preference or adulteration to all the truth revealed by God whether on the previous prophets or on Muḥammad (sws), it is entitled to receive a double reward as well. Thus all those who enter this *ummah*, will be blessed with this favour. Ḥadīth narratives have also explained this issue but since there is no difference of opinion in it, I find no need to go into details.

The words وَيَجْعَلْ لَّكُمْ نُوْرًا تَمْشُوْنَ بِهٖ express glad tidings similar to those expressed by verse twelve:

يَوْمَ تَرَى الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ وَالْمُؤْمِنٰتِ يَسْعٰى نُوْرُهُمْ بَيْنَ اَيْدِيْهِمْ وَبِاَيْمَانِهِمْ (remember the day when you shall see the true believers, men and women, with their light moving before them and on their right hands). These same glad tidings are given to these righteous people: they had protected the light of faith given to them by God; they guided themselves through it and also guided others through it; as a reward for this, they will be blessed with a light in the Hereafter which they will carry with them in the darkness of that day and all those will benefit from it as well who had supported them in this world.

لِّئَلَّا يَعْلَمَ اَهْلُ الْكِتٰبِ اَلَّا يَقْدِرُوْنَ عَلٰى شَيْءٍ مِّنْ فَضْلِ اللّٰهِ وَاَنَّ الْفَضْلَ بِيَدِ اللّٰهِ يُؤْتِيْهِ مَنْ يَّشَآءُ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ ذُو الْفَضْلِ الْعَظِيْمِ ﴿۲۹﴾[33]

In this verse, these people are urged to take the lead in becoming the beneficiaries of this blessing of God and to leave aside the jealous Jews. They are told to let them burn in the fire of envy they have ignited in themselves against the unlettered Prophet and those who have professed faith in him. The reason for their jealousy is that they think that only they should be the recipients of God's favours; they do not know that they are not the masters of God's favours; only God Himself is their master; He blesses these favours to whomever He desires. He is very gracious and can bless anyone He wants to.

Though the words اَهْلُ الْكِتٰبِ (People of the Book) used here are general in their apparent sense and thus can refer to both the Jews and Christians, however concomitant indications show that they refer to the Jews as a collectivity because it was they who had the conceited notion of being the recipients of all the favours and blessings of God. They thought that prophethood could only be given to their race and they alone were the recipients of God's favours and blessings. Because of this very arrogance of theirs, they were very opposed to the claim to prophethood by Muḥammad (sws). When they saw that in spite of their opposition, his call and message were spreading and even many nobles from amongst their own ranks were

33. So that the People of the Book do not know that they do not have any control in anything the grace of God and that grace is in God's Hands alone. He bestows it upon whom He wills and abounding is God's grace.

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joining the new faith and becoming its die-hard supporters, the fever of jealousy engulfed them to such an extent that it ultimately destroyed them. The causes of this jealousy and its effects and consequences have already been mentioned with great detail in Sūrah al-Baqarah.

The words لِّئَلَّا يَعْلَمَ اَهْلُ الْكِتٰبِ… (till the verse end) express the obvious consequence of this ignorance and foolishness of being continually jealous of the Muslims. They were obviously inflicted with this jealousy because they thought that they alone were the sole race entitled on hereditary basis to all the favours and blessings of God. Had they not been inflicted with this foolishness and had known that prophethood and leadership are God's gifts and He bestows these gifts to whomsoever He desires, there would have been no reason for them to be angry and jealous. They could have understood that God bestowed on them this position for a certain period and now if He is choosing others for it, no one can stop Him, and it is in their well-being to accept this decision of God instead of opposing it and showing jealousy. On the contrary, they continued to remain in the frenzy they had been inflicted with. The essential consequence of this was that the fire of spite and jealously they were burning in continued to increase. In other words, the real thing which is mentioned here together with inviting people to profess faith in the Prophet (sws) is that they should profess faith in the Prophet (sws) and make themselves entitled to double reward and leave the jealous Jews to themselves to burn in the fire of their jealousy. Instead of saying: "let these Jews burn in the fire of their jealousy and make yourselves entitled to double reward,' what is said is: "let the Jews remain in their ignorance that they regard themselves to be the only rightful recipients of God's favours whereas this is mere foolishness on their part, and it is this foolishness which is the cause of their sorrow and jealousy."

The benefit of adopting this style was that the real malady of the Jews also became evident and so did its cause without the discourse becoming harsh.

Our exegetes have faced a lot of confusion in interpreting these last verses of the *sūrah*. If I had cited all these interpretations and then critically analyzed them, it would taken up a lot of space. This exercise would not have been of any use as well. For this reason, I have presented the true interpretation which is in accordance with the language, context and parallels of the Qur'ān. It is hoped that it will convince people who reflect on it.

Here, two things specially should be kept in consideration regarding language and style:

Firstly, at times the real thing in the discourse is not the apparent discourse itself; it is its consequence. Thus for example the words "so that the People of the Book do not know that they have any authority on any of God's blessings," what is implied is its consequence: as a necessary result of this ignorance: they die by burning in the jealousy of those blessed.

Secondly, the word لَا is not superfluous here. Neither does there exist an example in

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the Qur'ān where it is superfluous. I have already explained at an appropriate place in this exegesis that it is among those letters about which there is absolutely no possibility to regard them so. Otherwise this will open the doors to deviations created by religious innovators and mischief-mongers. Nevertheless, this letter is at times repeated for the purpose of emphasis, and this repetition is customary as per linguistic usage. There are many examples of this in the Qur'ān and classical Arabic. For example: قَالَ مَا مَنَعَكَ اَلَّا تَسْجُدَ. (۷:۱۲) (what stopped you from not prostrating, (7:12)) and وَحَرٰمٌ عَلٰى قَرْيَةٍ اَهْلَكْنٰهَآ اَنَّهُمْ لَا يَرْجِعُوْنَ. (۲۱:۹۵) (it is ordained that no community We intend to destroy will not revert to the truth, (21:95)).

With the grace of God, I come to the end of this *sūrah's* exegesis. فَالْحَمْدُ لِلّٰهِ عَلٰى ذٰلِكَ (so gratitude be to God on this).

Raḥmānābād,
15th Decemeber, 1977 AD
4th Muḥarram al-ḥrām, 1398 AH

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Tadabbur i Qur’ān

Sūrah al-Mujādalah (58)

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Sūrah al-Mujādalah

Central Theme and Relationship with the Previous *Sūrah*

The previous *sūrah* ended with the answer to the objection raised by the People of the Book against *jihād.* The reason for giving this answer was that the objections raised by the opponents of the Prophet (sws) would be picked up by the hypocrites and secretly spread among the Muslims in order to weaken their faith and repress their zeal for *jihād*. It seems that these activities of the hypocrites had gained great momentum at the time of revelation of this *sūrah*. The situation demanded that this clandestine propaganda be checked. Consequently, in this *sūrah*, the hypocrites are severely reprimanded for indulging in such subversive activities, and in order to curb them, Muslims are also directed to adopt certain measures. Simultaneously, by presenting a very effective practical example, Muslims are taught how to deal with a difficulty they might face in following Islam: they should sincerely present the issue to the Prophet (sws). It is hoped that the Almighty will find out a way for them. The people who initiate a propaganda campaign against Islam by making an excuse of a hypothetical or real difficulty they might be facing are the ones who want to open a war-front with God and His Prophet (sws). Such people should remember that they will be humiliated. It is the incontestable decision of God that success and dominance is only reserved for God and His prophets.

Analysis of the Discourse

Verse (1-4): A reference is made to an incident in which a pious woman had to face a severe difficulty regarding a religious issue; instead of becoming frustrated and showing distrust in the Almighty, she presented her case before Him and His Prophet (sws) with all the confidence and purity of intention she could muster. The Almighty resolved her difficulty and set her forth as an example in the Qur'ān: the example of a person who adopted the correct attitude when troubles came her way. This was in sharp contrast with the attitude of the hypocrites who would show hostility and indulge in a covert and hostile propaganda against the Almighty and His Prophet (sws) when a particular directive of the *sharī'ah* proved adverse to their desires and wishes.

Verses (5-8): Disgust is expressed at the attitude of the people who, instead of showing trust in the Almighty and His Prophet (sws), were busy whispering evil suggestions to others and maligning the cause of Islam. They were showing disrespect to the Prophet (sws) and were presenting the lenience the Almighty was showing them

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by not punishing them as a proof of their correct attitude. They are warned that they shall not only be humiliated in this world as history testifies, but will also face a grievous torment in the Hereafter.

Verses (9-10): Muslims have been forbidden from sin and excesses and directed that their secret conversations should not be against the Prophet (sws); their intimate exchanges should be clean and pious. They are told that they should ignore the whispering campaign which the hypocrites have launched against them, for such whispering cannot harm anyone unless the Almighty permits it. It is befitting for them to trust their Lord and rest assured instead of worrying and being aggrieved by such insinuations. The Almighty shall protect them from the evil of the evil-doers.

Verses (11-12): The believers have been directed to follow certain manners when they are in the company of the Prophet (sws), and forbidden to carry out clandestine conversation when they are gathered around him. Certain emergency directives are given to curb the whispering campaign undertaken by the hypocrites.

Verse (13): After the achievement of the desired results, the emergency directives have been repealed and the believers have been directed to establish those forms of worship which shall put an end to this malady of whispering campaign and secret conversation; these forms have been spelled out for them.

Verses (14-22): An indication is made of the fact that the hypocrites are actually the agents of the Jews who have incurred the wrath of the Almighty; their real allegiance rests with them. Their glibness and their trait of swearing during conversation effectively conceals their real character and they are able to outwardly show themselves as Muslims. Their allegiance is actually with the enemies of Islam; they have been overwhelmed by the love of wealth. Satan has made them unmindful of God and they have joined his party to impair and obstruct the Prophet's mission; ultimately their efforts shall fizzle out, for it is the absolute judgement of the Almighty that only He and His prophets shall always prevail. True believers are those who sever their ties of relationship from the enemies of God and the Prophet (sws) even if they are their fathers, sons, brothers and tribesmen. The Almighty shall only be happy with such people; they are the people of His party and only they shall achieve success.

Section I (Verses 1-4)

Text and Translation

بِسۡمِ اللّٰہِ الرَّحۡمٰنِ الرَّحِیۡمِ

قَدۡ سَمِعَ اللّٰہُ قَوۡلَ الَّتِیۡ تُجَادِلُکَ فِیۡ زَوۡجِہَا وَ تَشۡتَکِیۡۤ اِلَی اللّٰہِ ۖ وَ اللّٰہُ یَسۡمَعُ تَحَاوُرَکُمَا ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰہَ سَمِیۡعٌۢ بَصِیۡرٌ ۝ اَلَّذِیۡنَ یُظٰہِرُوۡنَ مِنۡکُمۡ مِّنۡ نِّسَآئِہِمۡ مَّا ہُنَّ اُمَّہٰتِہِمۡ ؕ اِنۡ اُمَّہٰتُہُمۡ اِلَّا الّٰٓیۡ وَلَدۡنَہُمۡ ؕ وَ اِنَّہُمۡ لَیَقُوۡلُوۡنَ مُنۡکَرًا مِّنَ الۡقَوۡلِ وَ زُوۡرًا ؕ وَ

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اِنَّ اللّٰهَ لَعَفُوٌّ غَفُوْرٌ ﴿۲﴾ وَ الَّذِيْنَ يُظٰهِرُوْنَ مِنْ نِّسَآىِٕهِمْ ثُمَّ يَعُوْدُوْنَ لِمَا قَالُوْا فَتَحْرِيْرُ رَقَبَةٍ مِّنْ قَبْلِ اَنْ يَّتَمَآسَّا ؕ ذٰلِكُمْ تُوْعَظُوْنَ بِهٖ ؕ وَ اللّٰهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُوْنَ خَبِيْرٌ ﴿۳﴾ فَمَنْ لَّمْ يَجِدْ فَصِيَامُ شَهْرَيْنِ مُتَتَابِعَيْنِ مِنْ قَبْلِ اَنْ يَّتَمَآسَّا ۚ فَمَنْ لَّمْ يَسْتَطِعْ فَاِطْعَامُ سِتِّيْنَ مِسْكِيْنًا ؕ ذٰلِكَ لِتُؤْمِنُوْا بِاللّٰهِ وَرَسُوْلِهٖ ؕ وَتِلْكَ حُدُوْدُ اللّٰهِ ؕ وَلِلْكٰفِرِيْنَ عَذَابٌ اَلِيْمٌ ﴿۴﴾

God has heard the words of the lady who would argue with you about her husband and was complaining to God and God was hearing the conversation of both of you. God hears all and observes all. (1)

Those of you who do *ẓihār* with their wives, these wives do not become their mothers. Their mothers are those only who have given birth to them. In fact, such people utter words which are very despicable and false. And God pardons and forgives. And those who do *ẓihār* with their wives, and afterwards return to what had been prohibited, then freeing a slave is required before they touch each other again. This is what you are being counselled of. And God is aware of all that you do. Thus, he who has no slave available to him shall fast two successive months before they touch one another. And he who does not have the capacity to do this shall feed sixty of the destitute. This is enjoined on you so that you may have deep faith in God and His Messenger. These are the bounds set by God and for the disbelievers there is a grievous punishment. (2-4)

Explanation

قَدْ سَمِعَ اللّٰهُ قَوْلَ الَّتِيْ تُجَادِلُكَ فِيْ زَوْجِهَا وَتَشْتَكِيْٓ اِلَى اللّٰهِ ۖ وَاللّٰهُ يَسْمَعُ تَحَاوُرَكُمَا ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ سَمِيْعٌۢ بَصِيْرٌ ﴿۱﴾[1]

The words قَدْ سَمِعَ اللّٰهُ do not merely signify hearing as is evident from the occasion of the discourse; they also signify acceptance. It has been used in this meaning in the Qur'ān, and this meaning is common in the Arabic language as well. In our language too, hearing is used to refer to acceptance.

Before the word تُجَادِلُكَ, a suppression of an incomplete verb has occurred as per the general principles of Arabic language. It is evident from this that the lady whose incident is mentioned here came many a time to the Prophet (sws) to relate it.

The word مجادلة is used in the Qur'ān in both its positive and negative meanings. When used negatively, it refers to quibble and to quarrel. When used positively, it refers to convince someone through affection, pleading, insistence and fondness; here the element of quarrel is present too; however, this quarrel is with love and trust the way children try to convince their elders by quarrelling with them all the while trusting their affection. The best example of such an affectionate quarrel is that of Abraham (sws) which he had with His Lord regarding the people of Lot (sws). The Almighty praised it

1. God has heard the words of the lady who would argue with you about her husband and was complaining to God and God was hearing the conversation of both of you. God hears all and observes all.

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a lot. I have already referred to it in this exegesis. The argument of the lady mentioned in this verse was of precisely this nature as well. I could not find an appropriate translation of this word in Urdu; so I have rendered it as *jhagarnā* (to quarrel). However, this quarrel has a special connotation, and in this connotation it is used in Urdu as well on the condition that a person realizes its occasion and background.

Narratives mention the name of the lady referred to in this verse as Khawlah bint Tha'labah.[2] Her husband's name was Aws bin Ṣāmit al-Anṣārī. Once when he was angry, he uttered the following words to his wife: اَنْتَ عَلَیَّ کَظَھْرِ اُمّی (if I now become sexually intimate with you, it will be as if I came near my mother for this purpose). In the days of *jāhiliyyah*, such words would separate a wife permanently. For this reason, Khawlah (rta) became very anxious about her fate and that of her children if this separation took place. So, she presented her case before the Prophet (sws), and with insistence and assertion pleaded to him to solve her issue. Since the Prophet (sws) did not have before him a clear-cut guidance in this regard, it seems that he delayed responding to her. For this reason, she had to come to the Prophet (sws) time and again to resolve her issue.

It is also evident from the Qur'ān that in this matter Khawlah (rta) defended her husband to some extent. It is evident from some narratives[3] that Aws (rta) had a harsh disposition as a result of which he uttered this inappropriate sentence. He had absolutely no intention of divorcing his wife; for this reason, both husband and wife became very worried. Khawlah (rta) must have also related this situation to the Prophet (sws) so that it could become fully clear that while uttering this sentence, her husband had no intention of divorcing her. He uttered it inadvertently out of anger.

Ẓihār is also mentioned in Sūrah al-Aḥzāb; however, that mention is only as a passing reference by the words: وَمَا جَعَلَ اَزْوَاجَکُمُ الّٰٓئِیْ تُظٰھِرُوْنَ مِنْھُنَّ اُمَّھٰتِکُمْ.(٤:٣٣) (He does not regard the wives whom you divorce through *ẓihār* as your mothers, (33:4)). Nevertheless, in the first place, it is not necessary that Sūrah al-Aḥzāb should have been revealed before Sūrah al-Mujādalah. In the second place, even if it was revealed before it, what is only evident from these words is that by pronouncing *ẓihār*, a person's wife does not become his mother; they do not say what responsibility such a declaration entails and what a person should do for its atonement. So even though this verse of Sūrah al-Aḥzāb had been revealed to the Prophet (sws), he could only have decisively resolved the issue of Khawlah (rta) after being divinely guided. So he waited until a revelation came to guide him. Finally, he was provided this divine guidance and because of her affectionate complaints not only was her problem resolved, this guidance also showed the way out to countless men and women from this absurd ritual. Consequently, by praising her in the Qur'ān, the Almighty eternally preserved her affectionate complaint, and guided people

2. See: Ibn Kathir, *Tafsir al-Qur'ān al-Aẓim*, vol. 4, 319.
3. Ibid.

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that when they face some hardship in a matter of religion they should present it before their Lord the way this believing lady had done; like the hypocrites, one should not make it an excuse to raise objections, launch a whispering campaign and a matter of confrontation with God and His Prophet (sws).

وَاللّٰهُ يَسْمَعُ تَحَاوُرَكُمَا: Since this complaint was specifically addressed to God, He kept on listening to it with great affection and attention. He finally resolved the issue of Khawlah (rta). It is evident from this that those who speak out their problems to God should rest assured that the Almighty listens to them very attentively. He sees and knows all. And when He listens and also has power over everything, why should a person lose hope and harbour evil thoughts in his mind?

Here it should be kept in mind that like the case of material and mundane hardships, the most successful way in combating spiritual and intellectual confusions is to present them to God. At times, a person is faced with an intellectual problem which seems irresolvable to him, and this raises a lot of doubts about religion. In such circumstances, if a person presents his problem to God and asks guidance from Him, God willing, he will be blessed with peace of mind on the condition that he patiently asks for God's help. True seekers always adopt this behaviour; however, the mean and the hasty instead of adopting this behaviour either regard their doubts and superstitions as religion itself or by making religion an object of objection show confrontation to it. The result of this is what is stated later in this *sūrah*.

اَلَّذِيْنَ يُظٰهِرُوْنَ مِنْكُمْ مِّنْ نِّسَآىِٕهِمْ مَّا هُنَّ اُمَّهٰتِهِمْ ؕ اِنْ اُمَّهٰتُهُمْ اِلَّا الّٰٓـِٔيْ وَلَدْنَهُمْ ؕ وَاِنَّهُمْ لَيَقُوْلُوْنَ مُنْكَرًا مِّنَ الْقَوْلِ وَ زُوْرًا ؕ وَاِنَّ اللّٰهَ لَعَفُوٌّ غَفُوْرٌ ۝[4]

In this regard, the first principal guidance is that by uttering such words, wives do not become mothers of such people. Their mothers are only those who have given them birth. These mothers are prohibited to them in marriage because of this relationship and this prohibition is a natural and an eternal one. Such a prohibition cannot be regarded to be present in some other woman merely because a person had likened her or a limb of her to his mother. Those who utter such words utter what is vicious and false on which they are indeed worthy of being punished; however, this utterance does not make the wife prohibited to a person.

The implication of the words وَاِنَّ اللّٰهَ لَعَفُوٌّ غَفُوْرٌ is that if a person while being overcome with anger uttered such an evil and untruthful statement and later realized his folly, then God is Gracious and Forgiving. Consequently, in the case under discussion as well, since the perpetrator of this mistake realized the wrong he had done, the Almighty forgave him.

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4. Those of you who do *ẓihār* with their wives, these wives do not become their mothers. Their mothers are those only who have given birth to them. In fact, such people utter words which are very despicable and false. And God pardons and forgives.

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It needs to be kept in mind here that in the age of *jāhiliyyah*, just as the Arabs had given adopted children the same status as real children, similarly in case of *ẓihār* too, they were extremely strict. If a person uttered such words for his wife, then as per the general practice she would become prohibited to him like his own mother. Never could a person have sexual intimacy with his wife after this. If any person dared to do it, he was looked upon as a person who had married his mother. For this reason Islam, while reforming such unnatural customs, has at all places directed man's attention to put each thing at its place as prescribed by the laws of nature. He should not try to pervert this natural religion by making such changes. This issue has been discussed at length in the exegesis of Sūrah al-Aḥzāb. Here too, while reforming this evil custom in order to silence the objectors it is said in the very beginning that such inappropriate utterances do not change the laws of nature. A wife does not become a person's mother merely by such a false utterance of his.

A question arises about a declension in the expression: مَّا هُنَّ اُمَّهٰتِهِمْ. Why is the word اُمَّهٰتِهِمْ declined in the accusative. In my opinion, the word مَا here connotes لَيْسَ. Examples of this usage exist in the Qur'ān. Thus it is said in Sūrah al-Ḥāqqah: فَمَا مِنْكُمْ مِّنْ اَحَدٍ عَنْهُ حٰجِزِيْنَ (٤٧:٦٩) (then no one among you could have withheld Us from this, (69:47)).

وَالَّذِيْنَ يُظٰهِرُوْنَ مِنْ نِّسَآىِٕهِمْ ثُمَّ يَعُوْدُوْنَ لِمَا قَالُوْا فَتَحْرِيْرُ رَقَبَةٍ مِّنْ قَبْلِ اَنْ يَّتَمَآسَّا ؕ ذٰلِكُمْ تُوْعَظُوْنَ بِهٖ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُوْنَ خَبِيْرٌ ۝٣[5]

Mentioned in this verse is the way out for a person who has done *ẓihār* with his wife, and wants to undo it: he must liberate one slave as atonement of this sin.

The implication of the verse is that though his wife will not become prohibited to him as his mother is, yet since marriage and divorce have lasting effects on social life, in their matter both solemnity and jest carry great significance. As a result, such a person should be admonished and punished in some way so that he remains careful in future, and others too learn a lesson from this. Thus it is essential for him to liberate a slave before he becomes intimate with his wife. The word used here is رَقَبَةٌ (neck). It is evident from this word that no distinction is to be made in this regard between a slave-man and a slave-lady. Some jurists do not even make a distinction between a Muslim and a non-Muslim in this regard. Whoever is available can be used to atone for the sin. The only thing is that if a Muslim slave is available, he should be preferred.

Here it needs to be kept in consideration that the emancipation of a slave has been stated as the first option. If a slave is not available, the two other alternatives mentioned later can be opted for. This reinforces my view stated in Sūrah al-Nūr that

5. And those who do *ẓihār* with their wives, and afterwards return to what had been prohibited, then freeing a slave is required before they touch each other again. This is what you are being counselled of. And God is aware of all that you do.

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Islam opened the doors to slave emancipation in the widest sense. So much so, it regarded this emancipation to be an atonement of small or big sins so that the campaign of slave liberation is given impetus from every aspect.

There is a little ambiguity in the words: ثُمَّ يَعُوْدُوْنَ لِمَا قَالُوْا. The reason for this ambiguity is that what they allude to is self-obviously evil. The Qur'ān has also regarded it to be مُنكَر and زُور. It was inappropriate to mention an evil in explicit terms. For this reason, the Qur'ān referred to it in vague terms. The meaning of the expression thus is that if they want to do the same thing which they had prohibited upon themselves like the prohibition of their mothers, then they must liberate a slave before being intimate with their wives.

This ambiguity, in the first place, also stands clarified by the words: مِّنْ قَبْلِ اَنْ يَّتَمَآسَّا. Moreover, this very style is employed in verse eight of this *sūrah*: ثُمَّ يَعُوْدُوْنَ لِمَا نُهُوْا عَنْهُ (then do what they have been forbidden). Similarly, here too, it will mean that they undertake what they had pledged to abstain from or which they had forbidden upon themselves. A very exquisite example of the ambiguity found in the use of قَالُوْا and قَالَ etc keeping in view brevity and eloquence can be seen in verse eight of Sūrah Maryam. For more details, its exegesis can be looked up.

The stress in the words مِنْ قَبْلِ اَنْ يَّتَمَآسَّا is that this atonement should be made before being intimate with the wife. In this next verse, this condition is repeated which shows its emphasis. For this reason, it is not allowed that a person while being overcome with desire should be intimate with his wife before he has atoned for it. If this is done, then it would be considered as exceeding the limits of God, as will be mentioned later.

The words ذٰلِكُمْ تُوْعَظُوْنَ بِهٖ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُوْنَ خَبِيْرٌ sound a warning that the advice being handed out is from God. If a person secretly disobeys it, then he should remember that God is well aware of all his deeds. The implication is that if He is aware of these deeds, then the perpetrators of these deeds will not be able to save themselves from His grasp. The word ذٰلِكُمْ refers to all what is said above. In other words, neither should a person insist on the custom of *ẓihār* belonging to the age of *jāhiliyyah* nor invent excuses and legal subterfuges to escape the directive of atonement; each directive must be obeyed in its true spirit. This will bring success both in this world and in the next.

فَمَنْ لَّمْ يَجِدْ فَصِيَامُ شَهْرَيْنِ مُتَتَابِعَيْنِ مِنْ قَبْلِ اَنْ يَّتَمَآسَّا ۚ فَمَنْ لَّمْ يَسْتَطِعْ فَاِطْعَامُ سِتِّيْنَ مِسْكِيْنًا ؕ ذٰلِكَ لِتُؤْمِنُوْا بِاللّٰهِ وَرَسُوْلِهٖ ؕ وَتِلْكَ حُدُوْدُ اللّٰهِ ؕ وَلِلْكٰفِرِيْنَ عَذَابٌ اَلِيْمٌ ۝[6]

If a slave is not available to a person, he should fast consecutively for two months, and if this is not possible for him, he should feed sixty indigent people. In these times,

6. Thus, he who has no slave available to him shall fast two successive months before they touch one another. And he who does not have the capacity to do this shall feed sixty of the destitute. This is enjoined on you so that you may have deep faith in God and His Messenger. These are the bounds set by God and for the disbelievers there is a grievous punishment.

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only these two options practically remain after the eradication of slavery which has been achieved exactly as per the intent of Islam.

It is evident from the word مُتَتَابِعَيْنِ (consecutive) that if before the termination of two months, a person becomes intimate with his wife, then he will have to begin the count again.

Here, though the condition of مِنْ قَبْلِ اَنْ يَّتَمَآسَّا is not mentioned with فَاِطْعَامُ سِتِّيْنَ مِسْكِيْنًا (feeding sixty indigent), yet it is understood to be implied. The reason for not mentioning it is that this option is not the primary one, it is only its corollary; when it was mentioned with the primary one, it was not needed to be mentioned with the corollary.

The words ذٰلِكَ لِتُؤْمِنُوْا بِاللّٰهِ وَرَسُوْلِهٖ mention the benefit of these directives: they have been given so that one's faith is strengthened in God and in His Prophet (sws). Here the word لِتُؤْمِنُوْا as per common linguistic principles of Arabic denotes completeness, examples of which can be seen in previous *sūrahs*. If a person bears some hardship to atone for his mistake or shortcoming, then he not only atones for the mistake, it also reinforces him with regard to the real objective.

The words وَ تِلْكَ حُدُوْدُ اللّٰهِ sound a warning the way the words ذٰلِكُمْ تُوْعَظُوْنَ بِهٖ sounded a warning earlier: these are the limits set by God; a person should not dare cross them otherwise the consequence will be very grave.

The words وَ لِلْكٰفِرِيْنَ عَذَابٌ اَلِيْمٌ imply that those who cross the limits of God are disbelievers and a grievous punishment awaits them in the Hereafter. So unfortunate are people who in spite of claiming to be adherents to Islam join the disbelievers.

Some other questions do arise about *ẓihār*. However, they relate more to *fiqh* than to exegesis. For this reason, I will not touch upon them. Those who want to look up the details should study books of *fiqh* to study these related issues.

Section II (Verses 5-11)

After the issue of *mujādalah-i ḥasan* (affectionate argument), the character of people who were inflicted with the ailment of *muḥāddah* (enmity with Islam and the Prophet (sws)) is mentioned. Though these people were apparently included among the Muslims, they were nurtured and supported by the Jews, and were working among the Muslims as their agents. Their special modus operandi was that they would start a whispering campaign against Islam and the Prophet (sws) among the Muslims by making some excuse in order to shake their beliefs and to make them lose hope in the future of Islam. Here these connivances of theirs are unveiled, and they are warned that the Almighty is aware of each and every whisper of theirs and soon they will face its consequences. At the same time, Muslims are informed of various measures to protect themselves from their evil and to cleanse the gatherings of the Prophet (sws) from their whispering campaigns.

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Readers may now proceed to recite these verses:

Text and Translation

اِنَّ الَّذِيْنَ يُحَآدُّوْنَ اللّٰهَ وَ رَسُوْلَهٗ كُبِتُوْا كَمَا كُبِتَ الَّذِيْنَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ وَ قَدْ اَنْزَلْنَآ اٰيٰتٍۭ بَيِّنٰتٍ ؕ وَ لِلْكٰفِرِيْنَ عَذَابٌ
مُّهِيْنٌ ۝ يَوْمَ يَبْعَثُهُمُ اللّٰهُ جَمِيْعًا فَيُنَبِّئُهُمْ بِمَا عَمِلُوْا ؕ اَحْصٰىهُ اللّٰهُ وَنَسُوْهُ ؕ وَ اللّٰهُ عَلٰى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ شَهِيْدٌ ۝ اَلَمْ تَرَ اَنَّ
اللّٰهَ يَعْلَمُ مَا فِي السَّمٰوٰتِ وَ مَا فِي الْاَرْضِ ؕ مَا يَكُوْنُ مِنْ نَّجْوٰى ثَلٰثَةٍ اِلَّا هُوَ رَابِعُهُمْ وَ لَا خَمْسَةٍ اِلَّا هُوَ سَادِسُهُمْ وَ لَآ اَدْنٰى
مِنْ ذٰلِكَ وَ لَآ اَكْثَرَ اِلَّا هُوَ مَعَهُمْ اَيْنَ مَا كَانُوْا ۚ ثُمَّ يُنَبِّئُهُمْ بِمَا عَمِلُوْا يَوْمَ الْقِيٰمَةِ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيْمٌ ۝ اَلَمْ تَرَ اِلَى
الَّذِيْنَ نُهُوْا عَنِ النَّجْوٰى ثُمَّ يَعُوْدُوْنَ لِمَا نُهُوْا عَنْهُ وَ يَتَنٰجَوْنَ بِالْاِثْمِ وَ الْعُدْوَانِ وَ مَعْصِيَتِ الرَّسُوْلِ ۫ وَ اِذَا جَآءُوْكَ حَيَّوْكَ
بِمَا لَمْ يُحَيِّكَ بِهِ اللّٰهُ ۙ وَ يَقُوْلُوْنَ فِيْٓ اَنْفُسِهِمْ لَوْ لَا يُعَذِّبُنَا اللّٰهُ بِمَا نَقُوْلُ ؕ حَسْبُهُمْ جَهَنَّمُ ۚ يَصْلَوْنَهَا ۚ فَبِئْسَ الْمَصِيْرُ ۝
يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْٓا اِذَا تَنَاجَيْتُمْ فَلَا تَتَنَاجَوْا بِالْاِثْمِ وَ الْعُدْوَانِ وَ مَعْصِيَتِ الرَّسُوْلِ وَ تَنَاجَوْا بِالْبِرِّ وَ التَّقْوٰى ؕ وَ اتَّقُوا
اللّٰهَ الَّذِيْٓ اِلَيْهِ تُحْشَرُوْنَ ۝ اِنَّمَا النَّجْوٰى مِنَ الشَّيْطٰنِ لِيَحْزُنَ الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا وَ لَيْسَ بِضَآرِّهِمْ شَيْـًٔا اِلَّا بِاِذْنِ اللّٰهِ ؕ وَ
عَلَى اللّٰهِ فَلْيَتَوَكَّلِ الْمُؤْمِنُوْنَ ۝ يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْٓا اِذَا قِيْلَ لَكُمْ تَفَسَّحُوْا فِي الْمَجٰلِسِ فَافْسَحُوْا يَفْسَحِ اللّٰهُ لَكُمْ ۚ وَ
اِذَا قِيْلَ انْشُزُوْا فَانْشُزُوْا يَرْفَعِ اللّٰهُ الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا مِنْكُمْ ۙ وَ الَّذِيْنَ اُوْتُوا الْعِلْمَ دَرَجٰتٍ ؕ وَ اللّٰهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُوْنَ خَبِيْرٌ ۝

Those who are confronting God and His Messenger shall be humiliated the way those before them of their sort have been. And We have sent down clear warnings, and an utterly disgraceful torment awaits the disbelievers. They should remember the day when God raises them all to life and will inform them of all their deeds. God has counted these and they have forgotten them. And God is present near all things. (5-6)

Don't you understand that God knows everything which is in the heavens and the earth? Three men do not converse secretly except God is the fourth; neither between five except He is the sixth; whether fewer or more, wherever they be, He is with them. Then, on the Day of Judgement, He will inform them of all their doings. Indeed, God has knowledge of all things. (7)

Have you not seen those who though forbidden to converse secretly do what they have been forbidden, and these people converse secretly of sin, transgression and disobedience to the Messenger. And when they come to you, they pay salutations to you in words which God does not greet you with, and say in their hearts: "Why does God not punish us for what we say?" Hell alone is sufficient for them. They shall enter it; Thus, it is an evil abode! (8)

Believers! When you converse secretly, do not converse of sin, transgression and disobedience to the Messenger; converse what is virtuous and pious. And fear God before whom you all shall be brought together. (9)

These secret conversations are from Satan so that he inflicts sorrow on the faithful.

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Yet he cannot harm them in any way except by the will of God. And let the faithful put their trust in God. (10)

Believers! Make room in your gatherings when you are bidden do so; God will make room for you. And when it is said: "get up," then get up. God will elevate to high ranks those that have faith and knowledge among you. And God is fully cognizant of all that you do. (11)

Explanation

اِنَّ الَّذِيْنَ يُحَآدُّوْنَ اللّٰهَ وَرَسُوْلَهٗ كُبِتُوْا كَمَا كُبِتَ الَّذِيْنَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ وَقَدْ اَنْزَلْنَآ اٰيٰتٍۢ بَيِّنٰتٍ ؕ وَلِلْكٰفِرِيْنَ عَذَابٌ مُّهِيْنٌ ۚ[7]

The word مُحَادَّة means "conflict and enmity." It is the opposite of مُوَادَّة. Both these words are used very aptly in one verse of the *sūrah*, and shed light on the meaning of one another:(۲۲:۵۸) لَا تَجِدُ قَوْمًا يُّؤْمِنُوْنَ بِاللّٰهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْاٰخِرِ يُوَآدُّوْنَ مَنْ حَآدَّ اللّٰهَ وَرَسُوْلَهٗ. (you shall not find people who believe in God and in the Last Day on friendly terms with those who oppose God and His Messenger, (58:22)).

In the previous paragraph, as is evident, the character of those people has been described who come only to God and His Prophet (sws) when they are faced with some hardship and affectionately plead before them. Now the character of people who though claimed to have faith yet opposed God and His Prophet (sws) is being portrayed. They would start a whispering campaign and clandestine propaganda against any directive of Islam which they felt was against their benefit and interest. Their objective would be to shake and unsettle the faith of sincere Muslims by these evil promptings. All their sympathies, as will become evident later, were with the enemies of Islam, in particular the Jews. They were the agents of the Jews among the Muslims, and under their guidance would continually be on the look out to find an opportunity to harm the Muslims. Details of the turmoil they caused in the matters of 'Ā'ishah (rta) and Zaynab (rta) have already been mentioned in Sūrah al-Nūr and Sūrah al-Aḥzāb. The issue of *ẓihār* was also among the ones in which they could have made the concession given by the Qur'ān a target of objection in order to create misconceptions in the mind of simpletons. In the age of *jāhiliyyah*, as referred to before, *ẓihār* signified a permanent divorce between a husband and wife. These miscreants could have easily begun the whispering campaign that Islam had, God forbid, allowed its followers to contract marriage with their mothers. This situation required that these miscreants be totally unveiled so that any mischief they tried to spread could be curbed.

The word كَبَتَ means "to destroy someone by humiliating him." The verse كُبِتُوْا كَمَا كُبِتَ الَّذِيْنَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ says that these people will be doomed after being humiliated the way others, before them, of similar character were. The words وَقَدْ اَنْزَلْنَآ اٰيٰتٍۢ بَيِّنٰتٍ (and We

7. Those who are confronting God and His Messenger shall be humiliated the way those before them of their sort have been. And We have sent down clear warnings, and an utterly disgraceful torment awaits the disbelievers.

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have sent down [in the Qur'ān] clear arguments to validate this claim) refer to the historical facts which have been mentioned in detail in the Qur'ān to show that those who oppose God's prophets are ultimately humbled.

The words وَ لِلۡكٰفِرِيۡنَ عَذَابٌ مُّهِيۡنٌ say that for these disbelievers too a disgraceful punishment lies in store ultimately. The reference is to those disbelievers who were proactive in opposing the Prophet (sws). The verse says that they too will be humiliated eventually the way others like them before were. If their character is the same, there is no reason that their fate be different. The law of God is the same for all.

This warning of the Qur'ān materialized when the power of the Quraysh was also humbled, and the Jews too met their fate. At that time, no refuge remained for the hypocrites who would indulge in intrigues under the patronage of the Jews. They met the same fate as their guides: the Jews. The succeeding *sūrahs* mention the details of the exemplary fate they met.

The punishment they were given has been called humiliating because they had to encounter punishments of execution, exile and slavery, and no one showed any sympathy to them; everyone, on the other hand, cursed them.

يَوۡمَ يَبۡعَثُهُمُ اللّٰهُ جَمِيۡعًا فَيُنَبِّئُهُمۡ بِمَا عَمِلُوۡا ؕ اَحۡصٰهُ اللّٰهُ وَنَسُوۡهُ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ عَلٰى كُلِّ شَىۡءٍ شَهِيۡدٌ ۝[8]

The accusative form of يَوۡمَ can be because of the words عَذَابٌ مُّهِيۡنٌ mentioned in the previous verse; however, in my opinion, it is because of a suppressed verb as per common linguistic principles of Arabic. The implication is that whatever punishment will befall them will only be a prelude; they should also remember the day when the Almighty will raise them to life again and bring up before them their actions. The word جَمِيۡعًا points to the fact that all the components and motives of the conspiracies and whispering campaigns which are taking place today shall be gathered, and the Almighty will unveil to each person his secrets and inform him of who suggested what and who complied in what manner.

By the word فَيُنَبِّئُهُمۡ obviously is implied its consequences: The Almighty will inform them of all their deeds so that they face their consequences.

The words اَحۡصٰهُ اللّٰهُ وَنَسُوۡهُ are meant to dispel a great misconception: people should not think that if they have forgotten everything they had done, the Almighty too will forget it. Since they were not punished because of their mischief, they thought that the Almighty too had forgotten it; in fact, the Almighty has noted each and every act of theirs, and has fixed a day for reward and punishment on which the good and evil deeds done by each person will come up before him.

The words وَ اللّٰهُ عَلٰى كُلِّ شَىۡءٍ شَهِيۡدٌ substantiate what is just said: The Almighty is not

8. They should remember the day when God raises them all to life and will inform them of all their deeds. God has counted these and they have forgotten them. And God is present near all things.

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absent from anywhere; whatever happens in the heavens and the earth happens before Him and He is omnipresent.

اَلَمۡ تَرَ اَنَّ اللّٰهَ يَعۡلَمُ مَا فِى السَّمٰوٰتِ وَمَا فِى الۡاَرۡضِ ؕ مَا يَكُوۡنُ مِنۡ نَّجۡوٰى ثَلٰثَةٍ اِلَّا هُوَ رَابِعُهُمۡ وَلَا خَمۡسَةٍ اِلَّا هُوَ سَادِسُهُمۡ وَلَاۤ اَدۡنٰى مِنۡ ذٰلِكَ وَلَاۤ اَكۡثَرَ اِلَّا هُوَ مَعَهُمۡ اَيۡنَ مَا كَانُوۡا ۚ ثُمَّ يُنَبِّئُهُمۡ بِمَا عَمِلُوۡا يَوۡمَ الۡقِيٰمَةِ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ بِكُلِّ شَىۡءٍ عَلِيۡمٌ ﴿۷﴾[9]

This is a further explanation of the fact that each and everything in the heavens and the earth is in the knowledge of God. He will present to each person all his deeds. The address اَلَمۡ تَرَ is general in nature, and on this occasion, this style refers to the fact that this is something which should be evident to everyone. When God is the Creator of the heavens and the earth and when He alone is running all their affairs and each and every object moves because of His permission and because of His leave living beings continue to live, then how is it possible that He remain unaware of anything belonging to the heavens and the earth? In Sūrah al-Mulk, it is said: اَلَا يَعۡلَمُ مَنۡ خَلَقَ. (۱٤:٦٧) (would He not know Who has created? (67:14)).

The rest of the verse from مَا يَكُوۡنُ مِنۡ نَّجۡوٰى ثَلٰثَةٍ to the end implies that when the knowledge of God is all-embracing, then these people who connive and whisper against God and His Prophet (sws) should remember that when three of them are conversing in private, the fourth is God, and when five of them are conversing in private, the sixth is God. Thus, whether less from this number or more God is necessarily present alongside them. The words اَيۡنَ مَا كَانُوۡا imply that these people should remember that wherever they converse in secret, God will be with them. They cannot find any place in the heavens and the earth in which they can hide from the omnipresent God.

اَلَمۡ تَرَ اِلَى الَّذِيۡنَ نُهُوۡا عَنِ النَّجۡوٰى ثُمَّ يَعُوۡدُوۡنَ لِمَا نُهُوۡا عَنۡهُ وَيَتَنٰجَوۡنَ بِالۡاِثۡمِ وَالۡعُدۡوَانِ وَمَعۡصِيَتِ الرَّسُوۡلِ ۖ وَاِذَا جَآءُوۡكَ حَيَّوۡكَ بِمَا لَمۡ يُحَيِّكَ بِهِ اللّٰهُ ۙ وَيَقُوۡلُوۡنَ فِىۡۤ اَنۡفُسِهِمۡ لَوۡلَا يُعَذِّبُنَا اللّٰهُ بِمَا نَقُوۡلُ ؕ حَسۡبُهُمۡ جَهَنَّمُ ۚ يَصۡلَوۡنَهَا ۚ فَبِئۡسَ الۡمَصِيۡرُ ﴿۸﴾[10]

This verse expresses amazement at their state: they are repeatedly indulging in the very clandestine conversation from which they have been stopped. Moreover, they are audacious enough to indulge in secret conversation which is sinful and relates to

9. Don't you understand that God knows everything which is in the heavens and the earth? Three men do not converse secretly except God is the fourth; neither between five except He is the sixth; whether fewer or more, wherever they be, He is with them. Then, on the Day of Judgement, He will inform them of all their doings. Indeed, God has knowledge of all things.

10. Have you not seen those who though forbidden to converse secretly do what they have been forbidden, and these people converse secretly of sin, transgression and disobedience to the Messenger. And when they come to you, they pay salutations to you in words which God does not greet you with, and say in their hearts: "Why does God not punish us for what we say?" Hell alone is sufficient for them. They shall enter it; Thus, it is an evil abode!

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transgression and disobedience to the Prophet (sws). They are neither ashamed on this nor have any fear of God.

It seems that when their whisperings began, the Almighty tried to stop them; however, they never desisted; in fact, their mischief only increased. Ultimately, these verses sounded a final warning to them.

The words وَيَتَنٰجَوْنَ بِالْاِثْمِ وَالْعُدْوَانِ وَمَعْصِيَتِ الرَّسُوْلِ express the fact that there is nothing good in their private conversation, even though such conversation can relate to good things, as is mentioned in the succeeding verses. Their hearts are absolutely devoid of goodness. Thus their secret talks relate to sin, transgression and inciting people to rebellion against the Prophet (sws). The word اِثْم (*ithm*) refers to sins in which the element of usurping rights is dominant, and عُدْوَان (*'udwān*) refers to sins in which the element of transgression, rebellion and arrogance is dominant. When used together, these words embrace all types of sins.

The words وَمَعْصِيَتِ الرَّسُوْلِ express the real objective of these malicious campaigns of the miscreants: they want to incite Muslims to rebel against the Prophet (sws) in order to dismember their lot.

These hypocrites, as has been indicated earlier, were nurtured and guided by the Jews. The purpose of all their activities was to create such mischief among the Companions (rta) that they were ruined before becoming an impregnable force. The details of this mischief are found in the previous *sūrahs* and will also be referred to in the coming ones. However, the Almighty humiliated them, and the faction of God which was organized by the training and education of the Prophet Muḥammad (sws) humbled all the enemies of the truth.

The words وَاِذَا جَآءُوْكَ حَيَّوْكَ بِمَا لَمْ يُحَيِّكَ بِهِ اللّٰهُ state an example of the malice these miscreants have for the Prophet (sws). When they come to the Prophet (sws), they pay salutations to him in exactly the opposite words prescribed by God. God and His angels send mercy and peace to him,[11] and these wretched people twist their tongues and instead of saying اَلسَّلَامُ عَلَيْكَ (peace be to you) to him, say اَلسَّامُ عَلَيْكَ (death be to you).

The words بِمَا لَمْ يُحَيِّكَ بِهِ اللّٰهُ are meant to express their callousness: what doubt remains of their wretchedness who pray for death of the holy person on whom the Almighty and the angels send peace and blessings? Also concealed in these words is assurance for the Prophet (sws): if these people desire death for him, then let them; for God desires mercy and His angels send blessings to him; so he should not care about what prayers these people make.

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11. The words of 33:56 are:

اِنَّ اللّٰهَ وَمَلٰٓئِكَتَهٗ يُصَلُّوْنَ عَلَى النَّبِيِّ ؕ يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا صَلُّوْا عَلَيْهِ وَسَلِّمُوْا تَسْلِيْمًا. (٥٦:٣٣)

The Prophet is blessed by God and His angels. Bless him, then, you believers, and greet him with a worthy salutation. (33:56)

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Examples of how the Jews and their agents would twist their tongues to distort words have been mentioned in Sūrah al-Baqarah. I have already described them in detail while explaining the words سَمِعْنَا وَ أَطَعْنَا and رَاعِنَا of verse 104.[12] They would similarly twist their tongues to make السَّلاَمُ عَلَيْكَ sound like السَّامُ عَلَيْكَ (death be to you) and the listener would think that they have said the former whereas the matter would be the reverse.

The words وَ يَقُوْلُوْنَ فِيْٓ اَنْفُسِهِمْ لَوْ لَا يُعَذِّبُنَا اللّٰهُ بِمَا نَقُوْلُ refer to their delusion because of which they continued spreading mischief on not being chastened for it.

The Qur'ān says that since they are not immediately punished for their mischief, they think that they are correct in rejecting the Prophet (sws) and in making fun of him; they reckon that had he been the messenger of God, then they would necessarily have been punished for this conduct; however, since no such thing is happening, it means that his claim is only a bluff.

The words حَسْبُهُمْ جَهَنَّمُ يَصْلَوْنَهَا فَبِئْسَ الْمَصِيْرُ state that Hell is sufficient for such people in which they shall necessarily be cast, and what an evil abode it is. In its presence, if no punishment visits them in this world, then it does not matter. Hell suffices for every latitude given.

These miscreants are threatened of punishment not only in this world as is alluded to in verse 5 above and is also mentioned further ahead in the *sūrah*, but fact is that they have to face Hell, and there is no reason for them to rest assured if any of them is not seized in this world.

It should be kept in mind that the greatest thing which increases arrogance and rebelliousness in a person is the delusion mentioned above. When he observes that he is not being punished in this world for his mischief, he becomes assured that he will never be punished, and the warnings sounded by the preachers are mere blackmail; they have no reality. In fact, this is mere lack of vision. If the results of deeds become immediately evident to a person, who would dare do evil? One would only adopt virtue; everyone would be pious and virtuous as a result. The real secret of this world is that it is not a place of reward and punishment; it is a place of trial and test. It is the Hereafter which is the place of reward and punishment, which is the most evident and indubitable fact of this universe. In its absence, the whole universe is rendered meaningless and purposeless and its creator a merry-maker. The fact of the matter is that he is not a merry-maker; He is an obviously powerful and wise being.

يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْٓا اِذَا تَنَاجَيْتُمْ فَلَا تَتَنَاجَوْا بِالْاِثْمِ وَ الْعُدْوَانِ وَ مَعْصِيَتِ الرَّسُوْلِ وَ تَنَاجَوْا بِالْبِرِّ وَ التَّقْوٰى ۭ وَ اتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ الَّذِيْٓ اِلَيْهِ تُحْشَرُوْنَ ۝[13]

12. Amīn Aḥsan Iṣlāḥī, *Tadabbur-i Qur'ān*, vol. 1 250-252.

13. Believers! When you converse secretly, do converse whisper of sin, transgression and disobedience to the Messenger; converse what is virtuous and pious. And fear God before

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These verses inform the Muslims that *najwā* (secret conversation) in itself is nothing bad. There are a lot of occasions in our social lives when the need to mutually consult one another arises. Consultation is one of the foundations of collective life, and it may also need to be kept a secret. If such a consultation relates to virtue, piety and mutual correction and reformation, then it is a means of blessing. So whenever Muslims consult in secret, they should do so for a noble purpose. However, secret consultation in which the hypocrites indulge and which relates to sin, transgression and disobedience to the Prophet (sws) is satanic in nature. Believers should abstain from it and keep fearing the God in Whose presence everyone will be gathered, and Who is fully aware of their secret consultations, as is stated earlier.

اِنَّمَا النَّجْوٰی مِنَ الشَّیْطٰنِ لِیَحْزُنَ الَّذِیْنَ اٰمَنُوْا وَلَیْسَ بِضَآرِّهِمْ شَیْـًٔا اِلَّا بِاِذْنِ اللّٰهِ ؕ وَعَلَی اللّٰهِ فَلْیَتَوَكَّلِ الْمُؤْمِنُوْنَ ﴿۱۰﴾[14]

This verse assures the sincere believers that the source of all these secret conversations of the hypocrites is the incitement of Satan, and what best Satan can do is to inflict some sorrow and grief in the hearts of the Muslims. He can do nothing beyond this. Without the permission of God, he cannot harm people; so the believers should disregard these evil suggestions and provocations of Satan and adhere to their stance; they should trust God that He will protect them from the mischief of every miscreant.

یٰۤاَیُّهَا الَّذِیْنَ اٰمَنُوْۤا اِذَا قِیْلَ لَكُمْ تَفَسَّحُوْا فِی الْمَجٰلِسِ فَافْسَحُوْا یَفْسَحِ اللّٰهُ لَكُمْ ۚ وَاِذَا قِیْلَ انْشُزُوْا فَانْشُزُوْا یَرْفَعِ اللّٰهُ الَّذِیْنَ اٰمَنُوْا مِنْكُمْ ۙ وَالَّذِیْنَ اُوْتُوا الْعِلْمَ دَرَجٰتٍ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُوْنَ خَبِیْرٌ ﴿۱۱﴾[15]

These secret conversations of the hypocrites would take place in every place and gathering, however they would specially indulge in them in the gatherings of the Prophet (sws) because it was here that they found the greatest opportunities to cast aspersions on Islam, to inflict sorrow and dismay in the hearts and to make fun and show disrespect to the Prophet (sws). Consequently, they would sit in groups in these gatherings and would not allow others to sit among them so that they could easily and freely comment on the conversation of the Prophet (sws). At times, when he would leave these gatherings or when the end of these gatherings would be announced, they would keep sitting to accomplish their evil objectives; in this way, they would get the

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whom you all shall be brought together.

14. These secret conversations are from Satan so that he inflicts sorrow on the faithful. Yet he cannot harm them in any way except by the will of God. And let the faithful put their trust in God.

15. Believers! Make room in your gatherings when you are bidden do so; God will make room for you. And when it is said: "get up," then get up. God will elevate to high ranks those that have faith and knowledge among you. And God is fully cognizant of all that you do.

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opportunity to spread evil suggestions among the people present or make schemes of some new trick. This situation called for some directives for the gatherings of the Prophet (sws) so that the hypocrites could be stopped from their satanic whisperings.

It is evident from the context that the word مَجٰلِس in اِذَا قِيْلَ لَكُمْ تَفَسَّحُوْا فِي الْمَجٰلِسِ refers primarily to the gatherings of the Prophet (sws); however, since the word is used in its plural form in the verse, the purpose is to guide Muslims to the manners and etiquette they should observe in all gatherings so that each of their gatherings becomes a reflection of the gatherings of the Prophet (sws). Similarly, at some instances, the word مساجد used is in the plural form; though it primarily refers to the Baytullāh as in اِنَّمَا يَعْمُرُ مَسٰجِدَ اللّٰهِ (۹:۱۸) yet since the word occurs in the plural what is intended to be conveyed is that the guidance given relates to all mosques because they are subservient to this great mosque.

The implication is that when the head of the gathering directs the people to sit with spaces between them, then this directive should be obeyed without any hesitation and people should sit at a distance from each other so that it is easier for others who would join to sit comfortably and it becomes difficult for the hypocrites to sit together and indulge in whispering. I have stated earlier that the hypocrites would sit closely together in the form of a group in the gatherings of the Prophet (sws) so that no one from outside them was able to infiltrate their groups; this would make it easier for them to show whatever response they wanted without any external interference; in this way, they would also be able to conceal their whisperings, gestures and sarcastic comments. At times, with this attitude they were able to create a lot of commotion the details of which can be seen in history books and the Qur'ān has also referred to them. At the time of revelation of this *sūrah*, their mischief had spread a lot. In order to curb it, it was told that when the head of the gathering asks people to sit at a distance, then this directive should be obeyed without any hesitation.

The words فَافْسَحُوْا يَفْسَحِ اللّٰهُ لَكُمْ say that if people make room for others, the Almighty will make room for them. The apparent sense of these words is that the Almighty will create room for them in Paradise; however, the truth of the matter is for the person who widens his heart for others, the Almighty widens the hearts of others for him. Every deed of a person whether apparent or hidden, good or evil has a natural impact; its true manifestation will take place in the Hereafter yet its consequences are also seen in this world as well, provided a person has eyes to see them.

The words وَاِذَا قِيْلَ انْشُزُوْا فَانْشُزُوْا say that if in a similar manner, the head of the gathering asks for people to disperse, then this directive too should be obeyed without any hesitation and without any feeling of inferiority.

The nature of this directive can be individual as well as collective. The implication is that when all the gathering is dispersed, people should whole-heartedly accept this, and should not think that they have been disgraced or that the Prophet's personal comfort has been given preference to a need of the collectivity and that they were not

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allowed to express themselves.

Similarly, if a person is individually asked to get up and sit at some other place or leave the gathering or give up his place to someone else, then he should obey this directive without complaining. If out of respect for the collective system he behaves in this altruistic manner, the Almighty will accept his sacrifice and elevate him as a result.

The words فَانْشُزُوْا يَرْفَعِ اللّٰهُ الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا مِنْكُمْ ۙ وَ الَّذِيْنَ اُوْتُوا الْعِلْمَ دَرَجٰتٍ occur in contrast to فَافْسَحُوْا يَفْسَحِ اللّٰهُ لَكُمْ. Even if this standing up and giving up one's place may seemingly be humiliating, the Almighty will make this a means of elevation for the believers.

The words الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا مِنْكُمْ ۙ وَ الَّذِيْنَ اُوْتُوا الْعِلْمَ دَرَجٰتٍ here are very meaningful. The implication is that the hypocrites who have infiltrated in the ranks of the Muslims will definitely raise objections against such a directive; they will regard giving space to others by getting up as tantamount to disgracing them. Some of them would even think that they are inferior to others with regard to knowledge and deeds because of which they have been given preference over them; however, men of knowledge and the faithful who will whole-heartedly obey this directive will be greatly rewarded in the Hereafter by the Almighty.

The words assure men of knowledge and faith that the Almighty is aware of all their deeds. In order to become aware of them, He does not need that an advertisement of their deeds and services be published in newspapers. Whatever sacrifice they make for the betterment of faith and the Muslim *ummah* and for the respect of the collectivity is fully in the knowledge of God and He will duly reward them for this.

Though this etiquette has been spelled out for the gatherings of the Prophet (sws), it should be observed in all gatherings, as has been indicated earlier. Today while blindly following the West, the ways which have been adopted are regarded to be very modern and developed; however, it is because of them that our parliaments and council have become more of places of duels. In them, various parties form factions only to defeat one another, make evil gestures, indulge in secret conversation and pass sarcastic remarks. At times, matters reach the extent that they even engage in brawls and hurl shoes and chairs at one another and the leader of the house, instead of reminding them of congregational etiquette, has to seek the help of the police.

Section III (Verses 12-13)

Just as in the previous verses, certain measures have been suggested to shield prophetic meetings from clandestine talks, in the same manner, in the succeeding verses a measure has been suggested in order to shield the person of the Prophet (sws) from the evil of those who indulge in these clandestine talks. When this mischief spread and the Qur'ān condemned it, many hypocrites started having long meetings with the Prophet (sws) to try to prove themselves to be innocent and to incriminate others for their own

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crimes. These people did not have the courage to do this in open gatherings and hence each of them would try to meet the Prophet (sws) in private. This situation demanded that certain restrictions be imposed on meeting him in private so that each person should not waste his time. This was an emergency directive. When the objective was achieved, this directive was abrogated and the abrogated verses were placed right before the abrogating ones so that one does not have any difficulty in appreciating the coherence in the discourse.

Readers may now continue to study the succeeding verses.

Text and Translation

يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْٓا اِذَا نَاجَيْتُمُ الرَّسُوْلَ فَقَدِّمُوْا بَيْنَ يَدَيْ نَجْوٰىكُمْ صَدَقَةً ۭ ذٰلِكَ خَيْرٌ لَّكُمْ وَاَطْهَرُ ۭ فَاِنْ لَّمْ تَجِدُوْا فَاِنَّ اللّٰهَ غَفُوْرٌ رَّحِيْمٌ ﴿١٢﴾ ءَاَشْفَقْتُمْ اَنْ تُقَدِّمُوْا بَيْنَ يَدَيْ نَجْوٰىكُمْ صَدَقٰتٍ ۭ فَاِذْ لَمْ تَفْعَلُوْا وَتَابَ اللّٰهُ عَلَيْكُمْ فَاَقِيْمُوا الصَّلٰوةَ وَاٰتُوا الزَّكٰوةَ وَاَطِيْعُوا اللّٰهَ وَرَسُوْلَهٗ ۭ وَاللّٰهُ خَبِيْرٌۢ بِمَا تَعْمَلُوْنَ ﴿١٣﴾

Believers! When you intend to confer in secret with the Messenger, give some charity before such conversation. This is best and more noble for you. But if you lack the means, God is Forgiving and Merciful. (12)

Have you become apprehensive that you will have to give in charity before conversing secretly with him? So, when you did not do this, and God had mercy on you, then be diligent in the prayer and pay the *zakāh* and show obedience to God and His Messenger. And God is well aware of all that you do. (13)

Explanation

يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْٓا اِذَا نَاجَيْتُمُ الرَّسُوْلَ فَقَدِّمُوْا بَيْنَ يَدَيْ نَجْوٰىكُمْ صَدَقَةً ۭ ذٰلِكَ خَيْرٌ لَّكُمْ وَاَطْهَرُ ۭ فَاِنْ لَّمْ تَجِدُوْا فَاِنَّ اللّٰهَ غَفُوْرٌ رَّحِيْمٌ ﴿١٢﴾[16]

As indicated before, this directive was given at the time when the epidemic of a whispering campaign was at its height; the purpose was to stop the hypocrites from interfering with the cherished time of the Prophet (sws). When these people were taken to task for this attitude, each one of them wanted to meet the Prophet (sws) in private to satisfy him with his obsequious talk, and if possible to attribute the burden of his sins to some other person. Since the Prophet (sws) had not imposed any condition on meeting in private, such selfish people would take undue advantage of his generosity. In this period also, they must have tried to specially take advantage of it. For this reason, a condition was imposed on them by the Almighty: anyone who

16. Believers! When you confer in secret with the Messenger, give some charity before such conversation. This is best and more noble for you. But if you lack the means, God is Forgiving and Merciful.

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wanted to meet him in private to talk secretly with him, would first have to spend in charity in the way of God. The indigent were exempted from this directive so that this should not become a burden for the poor among the Muslims. Similarly, the amount of charity was also not determined so that people should not feel its burden.

The real purpose of this directive, as indicated earlier, was to discourage the ever-increasing campaign of whispering and secret conversation launched by the hypocrites. They were generally plagued with the malady of greed and stinginess. The Qur'ān has pointed out this malady of theirs at various places. For this reason, the Qur'ān imposed this condition so that meeting the Prophet (sws) in private became a serious affair. Such people because of their miserliness would in the first place not even have the courage to do it, and if they did, their spending became a means of their spiritual purification and they were blessed with the urge to refrain from mischief.

The words ذٰلِكَ خَيْرٌ لَّكُمْ وَ اَطْهَرُ state the purpose of this directive: if they sincerely followed it, it would become a means for their betterment and success both in this world and in the Hereafter, and a source of cleansing their hearts. Thus the words also indicate that this directive was not given for the personal comfort of the Prophet (sws); it was meant to show them the path to success and salvation provided they gave it due importance.

The words فَاِنْ لَّمْ تَجِدُوْا فَاِنَّ اللّٰهَ غَفُوْرٌ رَّحِيْمٌ say that as before the poor and the indigent can continue to meet the Prophet (sws) in private for their conversation without any such restriction.

ءَاَشْفَقْتُمْ اَنْ تُقَدِّمُوْا بَيْنَ يَدَیْ نَجْوٰىكُمْ صَدَقٰتٍ ؕ فَاِذْ لَمْ تَفْعَلُوْا وَ تَابَ اللّٰهُ عَلَيْكُمْ فَاَقِيْمُوا الصَّلٰوةَ وَ اٰتُوا الزَّكٰوةَ وَ اَطِيْعُوا اللّٰهَ وَرَسُوْلَهٗ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ خَبِيْرٌۢ بِمَا تَعْمَلُوْنَ ﴿۱۳﴾[17]

This verse was revealed some time later to abrogate the previous directive mentioned in the preceding one. It was placed right after the previous verse in the middle of the *sūrah* so that the abrogated and abrogating verses are adjacent to one another. Obviously, a period of time must have elapsed between the two verses that the objective of the initial directive would have been fulfilled; in other words, the mischief of secret conversations of the hypocrites must have ceased for which the above-mentioned directive of paying charity before meeting the Prophet (sws) had been revealed. Some exegetical narratives show that the two verses were just separated by morning and evening. Probably, the reason for this could be that both verses occur adjacent to one another. However, this cannot be the reason for saying that there is little or no difference between the time of revelation of the two verses.

17. Have you become apprehensive that you will have to give in charity before conversing secretly with him? So, when you did not do this, and God had mercy on you, then be diligent in the prayer and pay the *zakāh* and show obedience to God and His Messenger. And God is well aware of all that you do.

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There are examples found in the Qur'ān such that the abrogating verse was revealed after sometime; however, it was placed right after the abrogated verse. A very clear example of this exists in Sūrah al-Muzzammil.

As explained earlier, the restriction imposed on meeting the Prophet (sws) in private was given in a certain period of time and was meant to curb a specific type of mischief. This restriction must have been lifted when this mischief had been checked or when the feeling of abstaining from it arose in the people. This purpose cannot be achieved in a few hours. Some time must have necessarily elapsed, and for this reason there must been such time difference between the two directives as is necessary to achieve an objective.

It is evident from the words ءَاَشْفَقْتُمْ اَنْ تُقَدِّمُوْا بَيْنَ يَدَیْ نَجْوٰىكُمْ صَدَقٰتٍ that the increasing tendency of speaking in private with the Prophet (sws) was curtailed after this directive. The hypocrites must have desisted because of their miserliness, while the sincere must have desisted not only due to their poverty but also because they must have realized that the Almighty does not approve of conversing in private with the Prophet (sws). Nevertheless when the objective of giving this contingent directive was fulfilled, it was abrogated.

What is firstly evident from the words فَاِذْ لَمْ تَفْعَلُوْا وَ تَابَ اللّٰهُ عَلَيْكُمْ is that neither did the people dare to talk in private with the Prophet (sws) nor did the event of paying charity for it arise. The second thing which is evident from it is that people generally felt ashamed that what they had hitherto being doing was not approved by God, and for this reason they were rebuked by Him. The expression تَابَ اللّٰهُ عَلَيْكُمْ means "God accepted your repentance." Obviously, this acceptance by God must have been after they had proved worthy of it by being ashamed of this behaviour. It is possible that there could have been some hard-hearts who did not take heed even after this warning; however, it is evident from the verse that generally people were ashamed of their behaviour. It is the practice too of the Almighty that when a good sentiment is found in most individuals of a community, He values this attitude. Consequently, the restriction was lifted.

The words فَاَقِيْمُوا الصَّلٰوةَ وَ اٰتُوا الزَّكٰوةَ وَ اَطِيْعُوا اللّٰهَ وَ رَسُوْلَهٗ ؕ وَ اللّٰهُ خَبِيْرٌۢ بِمَا تَعْمَلُوْنَ are said as a caution: though the restriction has been lifted, yet as a watchful measure Muslims must specially be diligent in the prayer, in paying *zakāh* and in obeying the Prophet (sws) so that the society does not face any more crisis and Satan is not provided with another opportunity to spread the menace of whispering.

Section IV (Verses 14-22)

The abrogating and abrogated verses which came in between were of the genre of a parenthetical sentence. As soon as they ended, the discourse once again returns to the discussion regarding the hypocrites. It is said that their real association is not with

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Islam; it lies with the Jews, who are the enemies of Islam. They befriend them, and on the basis of their false oaths have infiltrated among the Muslims. Their real malady is love for this world because of which they have become accomplices of Satan, and it is the inalterable verdict of God that He and His messengers shall always prevail and the faction of Satan will be vanquished. Faith in God cannot be combined with friendship with the enemies of religion. True believers are those who sever all ties with such people even if they are their close relatives. It is they who are the faction of God, and only they will succeed.

In the light of this background, readers may now proceed to the next section of verses.

Text and Translation

اَلَمۡ تَرَ اِلَى الَّذِيۡنَ تَوَلَّوۡا قَوۡمًا غَضِبَ اللّٰهُ عَلَيۡهِمۡ ؕ مَا هُمۡ مِّنۡكُمۡ وَلَا مِنۡهُمۡ ۙ وَ يَحۡلِفُوۡنَ عَلَى الۡكَذِبِ وَ هُمۡ يَعۡلَمُوۡنَ ﴿۱۴﴾
اَعَدَّ اللّٰهُ لَهُمۡ عَذَابًا شَدِيۡدًا ؕ اِنَّهُمۡ سَآءَ مَا كَانُوۡا يَعۡمَلُوۡنَ ﴿۱۵﴾ اِتَّخَذُوۡۤا اَيۡمَانَهُمۡ جُنَّةً فَصَدُّوۡا عَنۡ سَبِيۡلِ اللّٰهِ فَلَهُمۡ
عَذَابٌ مُّهِيۡنٌ ﴿۱۶﴾ لَنۡ تُغۡنِىَ عَنۡهُمۡ اَمۡوَالُهُمۡ وَلَاۤ اَوۡلَادُهُمۡ مِّنَ اللّٰهِ شَيۡـًٔا ؕ اُولٰٓئِكَ اَصۡحٰبُ النَّارِ ؕ هُمۡ فِيۡهَا خٰلِدُوۡنَ ﴿۱۷﴾
يَوۡمَ يَبۡعَثُهُمُ اللّٰهُ جَمِيۡعًا فَيَحۡلِفُوۡنَ لَهٗ كَمَا يَحۡلِفُوۡنَ لَكُمۡ وَ يَحۡسَبُوۡنَ اَنَّهُمۡ عَلٰى شَىۡءٍ ؕ اَلَاۤ اِنَّهُمۡ هُمُ الۡكٰذِبُوۡنَ ﴿۱۸﴾ اِسۡتَحۡوَذَ
عَلَيۡهِمُ الشَّيۡطٰنُ فَاَنۡسٰهُمۡ ذِكۡرَ اللّٰهِ ؕ اُولٰٓئِكَ حِزۡبُ الشَّيۡطٰنِ ؕ اَلَاۤ اِنَّ حِزۡبَ الشَّيۡطٰنِ هُمُ الۡخٰسِرُوۡنَ ﴿۱۹﴾ اِنَّ الَّذِيۡنَ
يُحَآدُّوۡنَ اللّٰهَ وَ رَسُوۡلَهٗۤ اُولٰٓئِكَ فِى الۡاَذَلِّيۡنَ ﴿۲۰﴾ كَتَبَ اللّٰهُ لَاَغۡلِبَنَّ اَنَا وَ رُسُلِىۡ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ قَوِىٌّ عَزِيۡزٌ ﴿۲۱﴾ لَا تَجِدُ قَوۡمًا
يُّؤۡمِنُوۡنَ بِاللّٰهِ وَالۡيَوۡمِ الۡاٰخِرِ يُوَآدُّوۡنَ مَنۡ حَآدَّ اللّٰهَ وَرَسُوۡلَهٗ وَلَوۡ كَانُوۡۤا اٰبَآءَهُمۡ اَوۡ اَبۡنَآءَهُمۡ اَوۡ اِخۡوَانَهُمۡ اَوۡ عَشِيۡرَتَهُمۡ ؕ اُولٰٓئِكَ
كَتَبَ فِىۡ قُلُوۡبِهِمُ الۡاِيۡمَانَ وَاَيَّدَهُمۡ بِرُوۡحٍ مِّنۡهُ ؕ وَيُدۡخِلُهُمۡ جَنّٰتٍ تَجۡرِىۡ مِنۡ تَحۡتِهَا الۡاَنۡهٰرُ خٰلِدِيۡنَ فِيۡهَا ؕ رَضِىَ اللّٰهُ عَنۡهُمۡ
وَرَضُوۡا عَنۡهُ ؕ اُولٰٓئِكَ حِزۡبُ اللّٰهِ ؕ اَلَاۤ اِنَّ حِزۡبَ اللّٰهِ هُمُ الۡمُفۡلِحُوۡنَ ﴿۲۲﴾

Have you not seen those who befriend people who incurred the wrath of God? They belong neither to you nor to them. And they intentionally swear to falsehood. God has prepared for them a grievous torment. Evil indeed is that which they are doing. They use their oaths as a shield, and have desisted from the path of God. So a humiliating punishment awaits them. (14-16)

Their wealth and children shall in no way be able to protect them from God. They are the inmates of Hell. They shall abide in it forever. On the day when God raises them all to life, they will swear to Him as they now swear to you and will think that they have a basis. Be informed that they are absolute liars. Satan has gained possession of them. Thus he has made them forget God's remembrance. They are the faction of Satan; Listen up! The faction of Satan will surely be the loser. (17-19)

Those who oppose God and His Messenger, it is they who shall be humiliated. God has decreed: "I Myself and My Messengers will surely triumph." Indeed, God is

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Powerful and Mighty. (20-21)

You shall not find any community who believes in God and in the Last Day on friendly terms with those who oppose God and His Messenger, even though they be their fathers, their sons, their brothers, or even their family. It is these people in whose hearts God has stamped faith, and strengthened them with a special blessing of His own. And He will admit them to gardens watered by running streams, where they shall dwell forever. God is well pleased with them, and they are well pleased with Him. They are the faction of God: and listen up! God's faction will surely triumph. (22)

Explanation

اَلَمۡ تَرَ اِلَى الَّذِيۡنَ تَوَلَّوۡا قَوۡمًا غَضِبَ اللّٰهُ عَلَيۡهِمۡ ؕ مَا هُمۡ مِّنۡكُمۡ وَلَا مِنۡهُمۡ ۙ وَيَحۡلِفُوۡنَ عَلَى الۡكَذِبِ وَهُمۡ يَعۡلَمُوۡنَ ﴿۱۴﴾[18]

This is an expression of wonder on these hypocrites; on the one hand, they are friends to those who have incurred the wrath of God, and on the other hand, they testify on oath that they are with the Muslims. The fact is that they are neither with those who have incurred God's wrath nor with the Muslims. They are not with the Muslims because professing faith in God and His Prophet (sws) in simultaneity with befriending the enemies of God are two opposites; they can never exist together. They are also not with those who have incurred God's wrath because their friendship revolves around their own interest. If they are faced with trying circumstances, these hypocrites will never be ready to bear any assault and will only declare their dissociation like Satan.

The words وَيَحۡلِفُوۡنَ عَلَى الۡكَذِبِ وَهُمۡ يَعۡلَمُوۡنَ state that they fully know that they are with no one except with their interests; however, by swearing false oaths they want to please both the Muslims and these people.

The words غَضِبَ اللّٰهُ عَلَيۡهِمۡ refer to the Jews who are alluded to by the words مَغۡضُوۡبِ عَلَيۡهِمۡ in the very first *sūrah* of the Qur'ān. Though these hypocrites were also friendly with the Idolaters of Makkah, the details of which will be found in the coming *sūrahs*, however, here reference is specifically to their friendship with the Jews. I have indicated earlier that these hypocrites were primarily reared and guided by the Jews, and had infiltrated among the Muslims as their agents.

اَعَدَّ اللّٰهُ لَهُمۡ عَذَابًا شَدِيۡدًا ؕ اِنَّهُمۡ سَآءَ مَا كَانُوۡا يَعۡمَلُوۡنَ ﴿۱۵﴾[19]

The implication of the verse is that these unfortunate people think that they have behaved very wisely by satisfying both through their oaths; In actual fact, this is not a wise policy they have adopted; it is a perilous game that they are playing. As a result of it, the Almighty has prepared a very grievous punishment for them which they will

18. Have you not seen those who befriend people who incurred the wrath of God? They belong neither to you nor to them. And they intentionally swear to falsehood.

19. God has prepared for them a grievous torment. Evil indeed is that which they are doing.

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face. They will encounter the punishment in this world reserved for the enemies of God and His Prophet (sws) besides the punishment of the Hereafter.

اِتَّخَذُوْٓا اَيْمَانَهُمْ جُنَّةً فَصَدُّوْا عَنْ سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ فَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ مُّهِيْنٌ ﴿١٦﴾[20]

These hypocrites have made their oaths as their shields. Whenever they are called to account on any of their mistakes, they make use of their fake oaths to assure others of their innocence, and in this way they think that they have saved themselves. They have sought refuge in these oaths in order to save themselves from the demands of religion. They have retracted from the step they had taken for the cause of God by declaring faith, and now instead of moving forward, they want to feign religiosity by swearing oaths; however, till when will they be able to continue with this? At last, they will have to face a humiliating punishment.

The word صَدٌّ is used both transitively and intransitively. Here it is used in the latter sense implying that they have desisted from moving towards God.

لَنْ تُغْنِيَ عَنْهُمْ اَمْوَالُهُمْ وَلَآ اَوْلَادُهُمْ مِّنَ اللّٰهِ شَيْـًٔا ؕ اُولٰٓئِكَ اَصْحٰبُ النَّارِ ۭ هُمْ فِيْهَا خٰلِدُوْنَ ﴿١٧﴾[21]

This verse refers to the yokes which have hampered their advance towards God: they have been lured away by the love of their wealth and of their wives and children, and for this reason they are not finding in them the courage to proceed to the path of religion. They do not know that their wealth and children will not be able to save them in the slightest of ways from the torment of God. There is an ellipses of the governing noun (*muḍāf*) in the expression: مِّنَ اللّٰهِ ie. مِنَ عَذَابِ اللّٰهِ. The implication is that if they remain entrapped in the love of their wealth and children in this way, then this thing will lead them to Hell where they will abide forever.

يَوْمَ يَبْعَثُهُمُ اللّٰهُ جَمِيْعًا فَيَحْلِفُوْنَ لَهٗ كَمَا يَحْلِفُوْنَ لَكُمْ وَيَحْسَبُوْنَ اَنَّهُمْ عَلٰى شَيْءٍ ؕ اَلَآ اِنَّهُمْ هُمُ الْكٰذِبُوْنَ ﴿١٨﴾[22]

If these people keep running from the demands of their faith while being lured away by the love of wealth and children, then they should remember the day when God will raise them and their children, and on that day too they will have no refuge but their false oaths on which they depend today. On that day, they will swear oaths to exonerate themselves from blame the way they are today swearing oaths before the Muslims. It is mentioned in verse 23 of Sūrah al-An'ām that when the Idolaters will see their

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20. They use their oaths as a shield, and have desisted from the path of God. So a humiliating punishment awaits them.

21. Their wealth and children shall in no way be able to protect them from God. They are the inmates of Hell. They shall abide in it forever.

22. On the day when God raises them all to life, they will swear to Him as they now swear to you and will think that they have a basis. Be informed that they are absolute liars.

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imminent punishment, they will swear to their innocence: قَالُوْا وَاللّٰهِ رَبِّنَا مَا كُنَّا مُشْرِكِيْنَ (٦:٢٣) (By God! Our Lord, we were never among those who worshipped other gods. (6:23)

The implication of the words وَيَحْسَبُوْنَ اَنَّهُمْ عَلٰى شَيْءٍ is that by swearing false oaths they will think that they have furnished a very strong argument in favour of their innocence, and will think that just as in this world they had deceived many people through their false oaths, this deception of theirs will also work in the Hereafter; however, their deception will be of no avail to them. On that day, the Almighty will seal the tongues of the criminals, and their hands and feet and other limbs will themselves bear witness to their crimes after which no possibility of offering any excuse by anyone will remain.

The words اَلَآ اِنَّهُمْ هُمُ الْكٰذِبُوْنَ say that everyone should listen that if anyone has regarded them to be veritable, he should dispel this thought. They are the real liars, and have deceived others in this world because of their lies and in the Hereafter too will be audacious enough to try to deceive God.

اِسْتَحْوَذَ عَلَيْهِمُ الشَّيْطٰنُ فَاَنْسٰهُمْ ذِكْرَ اللّٰهِ ؕ اُولٰٓئِكَ حِزْبُ الشَّيْطٰنِ ؕ اَلَآ اِنَّ حِزْبَ الشَّيْطٰنِ هُمُ الْخٰسِرُوْنَ ﴿١٩﴾[23]

The expression اِسْتَحْوَذَ عَلَيْهِمْ means تَسَلَّطَ عَلَيْهِمْ. Satan has taken complete hold of them. People who are seized by Satan become indifferent to God because of him, and those who forget God become members of the faction of Satan. Here one should remember that as far as implanting evil suggestions is concerned, Satan tries to attack every person through them; however, only those who open their hearts to them, and regard Satan to be their guide and counsel are led away by these suggestions. The hearts of those who become his disciples in this way become devoid of God's remembrance, and they entrust their reins to Satan while disregarding the Hereafter. All such people become members of Satan's faction and Satan becomes their leader; he makes them wander wherever he wants them to. The real protection of a person is God's remembrance. After being deprived of it, he is lured away by Satan and then he does not find a way to escape from his clutches.

The words اَلَآ اِنَّ حِزْبَ الشَّيْطٰنِ هُمُ الْخٰسِرُوْنَ signify that though every person has been given a period of respite in this world as per the law of the Almighty and as a result even the faction of Satan has this time to spread whatever mischief it can, yet everyone must know that ultimately the faction of Satan is destined to doom.

اِنَّ الَّذِيْنَ يُحَآدُّوْنَ اللّٰهَ وَرَسُوْلَهٗٓ اُولٰٓئِكَ فِى الْاَذَلِّيْنَ ﴿٢٠﴾[24]

The real work of Satan's faction is to oppose God and His Prophet (sws) and to show rivalry to them. The verse says that the more respite they are given, the more

23. Satan has gained possession of them. Thus he has made them forget God's remembrance. They are the faction of Satan; Listen up! The faction of Satan will surely be the loser.

24. Those who oppose God and His Messenger, it is they who shall be humiliated.

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they show antagonism against God and His Prophet (sws); however, they will end up among those who had been humiliated earlier on by showing this attitude.

كَتَبَ اللّٰهُ لَاَغْلِبَنَّ اَنَا وَ رُسُلِيْ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ قَوِيٌّ عَزِيْزٌ ﴿۲۱﴾[25]

The Almighty has declared his established practice in this verse which He has ordained from the very beginning: in the struggle between God and the Prophet (sws) and between the faction of Satan, God and His Prophets shall always prevail. The faction of Satan will be humiliated. I have explained this established practice of God at a number of places in this exegesis that every messenger (*rasūl*) (as opposed to *nabī* (prophet)) sent by God to his people is a symbol of divine justice. He necessarily decides their fate in this world. If collectively these people denied their messenger, the Almighty destroyed them through some natural calamity after sifting out the messenger and those who professed faith in him. In case the believers were in substantial numbers, then after conclusive communication of the truth to the people, the believers were asked to wage war against them and shatter their power so that the world is cleansed of their mischief. It is evident from the history of messengers presented by the Qur'ān that most messengers encountered the first of the above-mentioned situation: after migration of the messenger and companions, a torment befell the people. It was only in the case of Muḥammad (sws) that the second situation arose: after migration he was directed to wage *jihād*, and his companions were humbled by the swords of his companions until they were totally routed.

The words اِنَّ اللّٰهَ قَوِيٌّ عَزِيْزٌ substantiate the premise why God and His messengers should necessarily prevail. God is not a weak being: He is Powerful and Mighty. When He sends His messenger to His people, then that messenger is His envoy who comes to people to inform them of the directives of their real king. If people rise to obey the directives of their real master, they are granted sovereignty by Him in the land and are blessed with His favours. On the other hand, if they take to opposing God, they are regarded as rebels, and once the truth is conclusively communicated to them, the Almighty cleanses the earth of them.

لَا تَجِدُ قَوْمًا يُّؤْمِنُوْنَ بِاللّٰهِ وَ الْيَوْمِ الْاٰخِرِ يُوَآدُّوْنَ مَنْ حَآدَّ اللّٰهَ وَ رَسُوْلَهٗ وَ لَوْ كَانُوْٓا اٰبَآءَهُمْ اَوْ اَبْنَآءَهُمْ اَوْ اِخْوَانَهُمْ اَوْ عَشِيْرَتَهُمْ ؕ اُولٰٓئِكَ كَتَبَ فِيْ قُلُوْبِهِمُ الْاِيْمَانَ وَ اَيَّدَهُمْ بِرُوْحٍ مِّنْهُ ؕ وَ يُدْخِلُهُمْ جَنّٰتٍ تَجْرِيْ مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْاَنْهٰرُ خٰلِدِيْنَ فِيْهَا ؕ رَضِيَ اللّٰهُ عَنْهُمْ وَ رَضُوْا عَنْهُ ؕ اُولٰٓئِكَ حِزْبُ اللّٰهِ ؕ اَلَآ اِنَّ حِزْبَ اللّٰهِ هُمُ الْمُفْلِحُوْنَ ﴿۲۲﴾[26]

25. God has decreed: "I Myself and My messengers will surely triumph." Indeed, God is Powerful and Mighty.

26. You shall not find any community who believes in God and in the Last Day on friendly terms with those who oppose God and His Messenger, even though they be their fathers, their sons, their brothers, or even their family. It is these people in whose hearts God has stamped

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Here at the end, a very clear standard is put forth before the hypocrites so that no confusion remains between the faction of God and the faction of Satan, and whoever they choose, they can do so by conscious consideration. The implication is that they can only adopt one of the two. It is not possible that they side with both at the same time. The verse says that it is impossible that a people believe in God and in the Hereafter and then befriend people who oppose God and His messenger. If a group befriends such people and also claims faith, then it is not true to this claim at all. The reason is that both these are opposites and cannot co-exist. A person only has one heart not two and he cannot harbour two opposing and contradictory things in one heart.

The words وَلَوْ كَانُوْٓا اٰبَآءَهُمْ اَوْ اَبْنَآءَهُمْ اَوْ اِخْوَانَهُمْ اَوْ عَشِيْرَتَهُمْ signify that let alone other relations, even the father, the son, the brother and other close of relatives of the family to whom a person has a natural affiliation also do not have the status that they can have a place in his heart if they oppose his faith.

The words اُولٰٓئِكَ كَتَبَ فِيْ قُلُوْبِهِمُ الْاِيْمَانَ وَ اَيَّدَهُمْ بِرُوْحٍ مِّنْهُ say that people who are ready to evaluate themselves or who let others evaluate them as per this standard are in fact the very people in whose hearts the Almighty has etched faith and has helped them with a special spiritual blessing of His. As far as people who claim to be adherents to faith, and also have ties with the enemies of God and His messenger are concerned, they are Muslims in name only; their hearts are not conversant with the faith.

The words وَ اَيَّدَهُمْ بِرُوْحٍ مِّنْهُ refer to the fact that a person's relationship with his father, son, brother, family and tribe is deeply rooted in his heart. It is not easy at all to sever it. However, when people whose hearts are alive with the sanctity and honour of faith are faced with such a delicate trial, the Almighty helps them with His special spiritual blessings, and they come out of this test with flying colours. To quote Ḥāfiẓ Shirāẓi:[27]

فیض روح القدس ارباز مدد فرماید
دیگراں ہم بکنند آنچہ مسیحا می کرد

(If the blessings of the Holy Spirit are at hand, then a person can do what Jesus was able to.)

It was as a result of this spiritual blessing that in the battle of Uḥud, Abū 'Ubaydah

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faith, and strengthened them with a special blessing of His own. And He will admit them to gardens watered by running streams, where they shall dwell forever. God is well pleased with them, and they are well pleased with Him. They are the faction of God: and listen up! God's faction will surely triumph.

27. Shams al-Din Muḥammad Ḥāfiz, *Diwān*, 2nd ed. (Tehran: Peyke Farhang, 1386 AH), 142.

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ibn al-Jarrāḥ (rta) raised his sword against his father 'Abdullāh al-Jarrāḥ, Abū Bakr (rta) challenged his son in the battle of Badr, Muṣ'ab ibn 'Umayr killed his brother 'Ubayd ibn 'Umayr, 'Umar (rta) killed his maternal uncle 'Āṣ ibn Hishām, and 'Alī (rta), Ḥamzah (rta) and Abū 'Ubaydah (rta) sent 'Utbah, Shaybah and Walīd ibn 'Utbah respectively to the gallows.

The words وَ يُدۡخِلُهُمۡ جَنّٰتٍ تَجۡرِیۡ مِنۡ تَحۡتِهَا الۡاَنۡهٰرُ خٰلِدِيۡنَ فِيۡهَا signify that these people were blessed by God with strong faith and spiritual gains and made them persevere in the path of truth and after their death will be admitted by Him to Paradise where they will abide forever.

The words رَضِیَ اللّٰهُ عَنۡهُمۡ وَ رَضُوۡا عَنۡهُ depict the greatest reward they will reap. The Almighty will be pleased with them because they duly fulfilled the obligations of the faith they laid claim to and passed in each trial they were put through and they displayed the very character in all the trials that the Almighty required of them. For this reason, the Almighty will congratulate them on the fact that He is happy with them. They did what He wanted them to do. They will now get from God whatever they desire.

The fact that they were pleased with God means that the promises on which they lived and died in this world will be fulfilled in a far better manner than what they expected or imagined, and as a result they will be very happy because all their desires will be fulfilled.

The words اُولٰٓئِكَ حِزۡبُ اللّٰهِ ؕ اَلَاۤ اِنَّ حِزۡبَ اللّٰهِ هُمُ الۡمُفۡلِحُوۡنَ state that it is these people who will be worthy of being counted among the faction of God, and it is they only who will succeed. The characteristics of the faction of Satan have been delineated earlier. Now with the mention of the faction of God, this *sūrah* comes to it end. فَلۡحَمۡدُ لِلّٰهِ عَلٰى ذَالِك (gratitude be to God for this) and اللّٰهُمَّ اَرِنَا الحَقَّ حَقّا وَارۡزُقۡنَا اِتِّبَاعَهُ وَاَرِنَا البَاطِلَ بَاطِلًا وَارۡزُقۡنَا اِجۡتِنَابَهُ (God! Show us the truth the way it is and make us follow it and show us falsehood the way it is and make us abstain from it.)

Raḥmānābād,
10th January, 1978 AD
29th Muḥarram al-Ḥarām, 1398 AH

Verses: 14-22

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Tadabbur i Qur’ān

Sūrah al- Ḥashr (59)

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Sūrah al-Ḥashr

Central Theme and Relationship with the Previous *Sūrah*

In Sūrah al-Mujādalah, the previous *sūrah*, it is mentioned that those who are opposing God and His Prophet (sws) are destined to be humiliated and that dominance is destined for God and His messengers. This *sūrah* brings to light the veracity of this claim through certain incidents, which took place in those times and informs the hypocrites to seek a lesson from these incidents if they have eyes. The Almighty intilled fear in the hearts of the enemies who were regarded invincible by them; they were so terror-struck that they ruined their homes by their own hands and were compelled to lead a life in exile and none of their supporters could come to their help.

The whole *sūrah* addresses the hypocrites. At the very end, they are also told that in order to dispel their doubts and to melt their hearts, the Almighty has revealed everything that was essential for this purpose. If this Qur'ān had been revealed on a mountain, it would have been crushed to pieces because of the fear of God. If it is not affecting their hearts, then this only means that their hearts are harder than stone, and they deserve to be treated by the Almighty in the manner He deals with such stone-hearted people.

Analysis of the Discourse

Verses (1-4): A reference is made to the exile of the Jewish tribe of Banū Naḍīr. They had been ordered to vacate their territory because they had broken their covenant and had plotted to kill the Prophet (sws). At first, they agreed to this punishment, but later, when some of their allies offered assistance to them, they changed their minds. Ultimately, the Prophet (sws) had to launch an attack on them in the 4th year of *hijrah*, after which they were forced to go to the land of Khaybar. They were given permission to take as much as they could upon their camels. Consequently, they took away what they could and whatever remained came into the possession of the Muslims. By citing their example, the hypocrites have been admonished to seek a lesson from this event. It is pointed out to them that they had wrongly thought that the Banū Naḍīr could not be banished from their land, whereas, as time proved, they had to leave their land, and, that too, in a manner in which they had to ravage the houses they had built by their own hands. The foes of the Prophet (sws) always meet this fate; if they will seek the support of these Jews, they too shall meet a similar fate.

Verses (5-10): In a parenthetical sentence, certain objections raised by the Jews and

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the hypocrites have been answered. These objections pertained to the ruining of the orchards of Banū Naḍīr by the Muslims and to the distribution of the *fay*. The attitude of contentment shown on this distribution by the Anṣār and the Muhājirūn, in sharp contrast with that of the hypocrites, is praised.

Verses (11-17): An indication is made of another mischievous deed of the hypocrites. After the exile of the Banū Naḍīr, they had started inducing the tribe of Banū Qurayẓah to break their covenant as well. They told them that they would also fight by their side if they were attacked and if they were exiled, they would also accompany them. It is pointed out to them that they are saying something which they can never do; neither will they offer their support, nor will they accompany them. They are only doing what Satan does: after a person commits a sin on his incitement, he withdraws by proclaiming his acquittal. The Banū Qurayẓah are warned that if they also break the covenant due to the backing of the hypocrites, their fate will be no different from that of the Banū Naḍīr.

Verses (18-24): In this concluding section of the *sūrah*, the believers in general and the hypocrites in particular, are warned to always keep in mind the Day of Judgement. They should not become like those who had forgotten the Almighty and as a result, forgot their purpose of existence and the fate they would meet. There would be a great difference between those who would dwell in Paradise and those who would abide in Hell; this difference should not be ignored by belittling it; only the dwellers of Paradise will attain real success. It should be kept in mind that truth has been revealed to them in its ultimate form, after which no excuse, but stubbornness on their part, could deny it. Had the Qur'ān been revealed on a mountain, it would have been shattered to pieces due to the dread and awe of God. If their hearts are not being influenced by its message, then it is not the fault of the Qur'ān; rather, it is due to their own hardheartedness which is alienating them from this Divine Call.

In the end, a reference is made to certain attributes of the Almighty, to inculcate the qualities of submission and trust in the believers who have a strong faith, and to cultivate the qualities of determination and confidence in those among them who have a weak faith, while in the hypocrites they are meant to create a fear of the Almighty. The *sūrah* finally ends on the note it began.

Text and Translation

Section I: Verses (1-4)

بِسۡمِ اللّٰہِ الرَّحۡمٰنِ الرَّحِیۡمِ

سَبَّحَ لِلّٰہِ مَا فِی السَّمٰوٰتِ وَ مَا فِی الۡاَرۡضِ ۚ وَ ہُوَ الۡعَزِیۡزُ الۡحَکِیۡمُ ﴿۱﴾ ہُوَ الَّذِیۡۤ اَخۡرَجَ الَّذِیۡنَ کَفَرُوۡا مِنۡ اَہۡلِ الۡکِتٰبِ مِنۡ دِیَارِہِمۡ لِاَوَّلِ الۡحَشۡرِ ؕ مَا ظَنَنۡتُمۡ اَنۡ یَّخۡرُجُوۡا وَ ظَنُّوۡۤا اَنَّہُمۡ مَّانِعَتُہُمۡ حُصُوۡنُہُمۡ مِّنَ اللّٰہِ فَاَتٰىہُمُ اللّٰہُ مِنۡ حَیۡثُ لَمۡ

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يَحْتَسِبُوْا ۭ وَقَذَفَ فِيْ قُلُوْبِهِمُ الرُّعْبَ يُخْرِبُوْنَ بُيُوْتَهُمْ بِاَيْدِيْهِمْ وَاَيْدِي الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ ۣ فَاعْتَبِرُوْا يٰٓاُولِي الْاَبْصَارِ ۝ وَلَوْلَآ اَنْ كَتَبَ اللّٰهُ عَلَيْهِمُ الْجَلَاۗءَ لَعَذَّبَهُمْ فِي الدُّنْيَا ۭ وَلَهُمْ فِي الْاٰخِرَةِ عَذَابُ النَّارِ ۝ ذٰلِكَ بِاَنَّهُمْ شَاۗقُّوا اللّٰهَ وَرَسُوْلَهٗ ۚ وَمَنْ يُّشَاۗقِّ اللّٰهَ فَاِنَّ اللّٰهَ شَدِيْدُ الْعِقَابِ ۝

In the name of God, the Most Gracious, the Ever-Merciful.

All that is in the heavens and the earth gives glory to God only, and He alone is Mighty, and Wise. It was He that drove the disbelievers among the People of the Book out of their dwellings as their first fate. You never thought that they would go; and, for their part, they vainly contended that their strongholds would protect them from the grasp of God. But God's scourge fell upon them from where they did not even expect it. And He struck terror into their hearts. They were destroying their dwellings by their own hands and also by the hands of the Muslims. So, learn from their example, O' you who have eyes. (1-2)

And, had God not destined exile for them, He would have surely punished them in this world and in the Hereafter for them is the torment of Hell. This is because of their crime of pitting themselves against God and His messenger. Those who set themselves against God, then God is stern in retribution. (3-4)

Explanation

سَبَّحَ لِلّٰهِ مَا فِي السَّمٰوٰتِ وَمَا فِي الْاَرْضِ ۚ وَهُوَ الْعَزِيْزُ الْحَكِيْمُ ۝[1]

This verse also occurs at the beginning of Sūrah al-Ḥadīd, I have already explained its implication in the exegesis of that *sūrah*. Here, what needs to be specially give attention to is that with slight variation, it occurs both at the beginning and at the end of this *sūrah.* It follows from this that the facts stated in this *sūrah* substantiate the implications of this verse. In other words, this *sūrah* also substantiates its claim stated in the previous *sūrah*, and also provides the testimony of the attributes of God which is mentioned in this first verse.

This verse reminds us of the fact that every object of this universe glorifies the Almighty and, by submitting to and serving Him, bears witness that the Creator is devoid of any blemish or weakness. He is beyond being associated partners with and has power on all things; no one can stop Him from doing what He wants; every act of His is based on wisdom. Therefore, the correct attitude for people is to resign themselves to Him and trust Him only; they should obey His directives only, fear Him only and all their hopes should be pinned on Him alone. Only He can control the affairs of this world; without His permission nothing can even move from its place.

A full grasp of the above mentioned facts engenders true faith in a person which is

1. All that is in the heavens and the earth gives glory to God only, and He alone is Mighty, and Wise.

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the fountainhead of all resolve and power. And if the facts are not properly appreciated, then hypocrisy, disbelief and polytheism are provided a path to enter the hearts, as a result of which, great anarchy results in every sphere of one's concepts and practices.

هُوَ الَّذِیۡۤ اَخۡرَجَ الَّذِیۡنَ کَفَرُوۡا مِنۡ اَهۡلِ الۡکِتٰبِ مِنۡ دِیَارِهِمۡ لِاَوَّلِ الۡحَشۡرِ ؕ مَا ظَنَنۡتُمۡ اَنۡ یَّخۡرُجُوۡا وَ ظَنُّوۡۤا اَنَّهُمۡ مَّانِعَتُهُمۡ حُصُوۡنُهُمۡ مِّنَ اللّٰهِ فَاَتٰىهُمُ اللّٰهُ مِنۡ حَیۡثُ لَمۡ یَحۡتَسِبُوۡا ۟ وَ قَذَفَ فِیۡ قُلُوۡبِهِمُ الرُّعۡبَ یُخۡرِبُوۡنَ بُیُوۡتَهُمۡ بِاَیۡدِیۡهِمۡ وَ اَیۡدِی الۡمُؤۡمِنِیۡنَ ۟ فَاعۡتَبِرُوۡا یٰۤاُولِی الۡاَبۡصَارِ ﴿۲﴾[2]

In the opinion of the exegetes, the words الَّذِیۡنَ کَفَرُوۡا مِنۡ اَهۡلِ الۡکِتٰبِ refer to the Jews of the Banū Naḍīr, who lived nearby Madīnah. In a nutshell, as per the details recorded by al-Bukhārī, although they had made a peace-treaty with the Prophet (sws), five months after the battle of Badr, they started to connive with the enemies of Islam. This was against the terms of the treaty, and they were also guilty of unsuccessfully plotting to murder the Prophet (sws). Because of these crimes, the Prophet (sws) asked them to leave Madīnah. Initially they agreed, but later 'Abdullāh ibn Ubayy, the famous hypocrite, incited them to refuse to go out because two thousand of his men as well as the Quraysh and the Banū Ghaṭfān were also with them. They were thus lured into this refusal by him. At last, the Prophet laid siege against them. At that time, neither did the Banū Qurayẓah come to their rescue nor did the Quraysh and the Banū Ghaṭfān. They were then compelled to obey the directive of the Prophet (sws). However, they were graciously permitted by him to take along them as much as they could on their camels. Consequently, they went to Khaybar and to Adhzra'āt with whatever they could take of their belongings. The belongings and assets they left behind were taken into possession by the Prophet (sws).

The words لِاَوَّلِ الۡحَشۡرِ imply that this exile of theirs was the first *ḥashr* they will be facing. Concealed in it is the warning that after this, they will have to face a similar *ḥashr*; thus, in the times of 'Umar (rta) they were exiled from these places as well, and the greatest of all *hashrs* awaits them too.

The words مَا ظَنَنۡتُمۡ اَنۡ یَّخۡرُجُوۡا وَ ظَنُّوۡۤا اَنَّهُمۡ مَّانِعَتُهُمۡ حُصُوۡنُهُمۡ مِّنَ اللّٰهِ فَاَتٰىهُمُ اللّٰهُ address the same hypocrites who have been mentioned in the previous *sūrahs*. They are told that they had great trust in the power and strength of the Banū Naḍīr, as well as in the backing and support of their allies. They thought that no one would be able to move them from

2. It was He that drove the disbelievers among the People of the Book out of their dwellings for their first fate. You never thought that they would go; and they, for their part, vainly contended that their strongholds would protect them from the grasp of God. But God's scourge fell upon them, from where they did not even expect it. And He struck terror into their hearts. They were destroying their dwellings by their own hands and also by the hands of the Muslims as well. Learn from their example, O' you who have eyes.

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here, and they themselves were also very proud of their fortifications that no one could dare encounter them face to face; however, they should see how their pride hath a fall.

In the expression مِّنَ اللّٰهِ the governing noun (*muḍāf*) is suppressed and the actual expression is to the effect مِّن بَاْسِ اللّٰهِ or مِّن عَذَابِ اللّٰه or مِّن بَطْشِ اللّٰه. The implication is that the fortifications and edifices built by them led them to vainly believe that not only had they become immune from human onslaughts, but also from the grasp of God. This is the true portrayal of the mentality of the conceited. Those who attain power and majesty in this world think that no one can enter their forts. So much so, if a servant of God warns them of God's clutches, they are unable to understand how God can enter their strongholds to seize them.

The words فَاَتٰىهُمُ اللّٰهُ مِنْ حَيْثُ لَمْ يَحْتَسِبُوْا say that these people in their estimation did not leave any way for anyone to enter their forts; however, God came upon them from where they could not even imagine.

The words وَقَذَفَ فِيْ قُلُوْبِهِمُ الرُّعْبَ portray the place from where God attacked them. They thought that by building walls of stones and rocks around themselves they would evade God's grasp; however, God did not even require dismantling these sturdy structures to seize them. He attacked them directly by striking terror in their hearts. The result was that in spite of their forts and strongholds, they were so terror-struck that they rampaged the houses they constructed with their own hands. It needs to be appreciated that real power does not reside in weapons or in the walls of forts; it resides in the hearts and is engendered by faith in God. If a person is equipped with this power, he can fight without any weapon, and if a person is devoid of it, then the greatest quantity of atomic weapons is of no use to him, and there is a strong chance that these weapons, instead of becoming a means of enemy destruction, become a means of their own destruction.

The words يُخْرِبُوْنَ بُيُوْتَهُمْ بِاَيْدِيْهِمْ وَاَيْدِى الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ depict how terror-struck the Banū Naḍīr were: they were destroying the houses they had constructed with their own hands with great zeal and desire. The word يُخْرِبُوْنَ portrays the situation as if it was occurring before the addresses of the *sūrah*. It has been mentioned above that they had been given the permission to take along on their camels whatever they could manage. Taking advantage of this permission, they tried to pullout the logs, joints, doors and windows to take with them. Besides greed, they were also driven into this because of their enmity with the Muslims: for this reason, they would have tried to render useless whatever they left behind, so that Muslims were not able to use them in any way.

They must have been assisted by the Muslims in this rampage-operation launched by them in order that they be driven out as soon as possible. This is evident from the words وَاَيْدِى الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ. Moreover, it is evident from some succeeding verses that Muslims struck down some of their trees for war needs.

The words فَاعْتَبِرُوْا يٰٓاُولِى الْاَبْصَارِ urge all people who can seek a lesson to learn a lesson

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from this incident and realize the truth of the words of the Qur'ān; how the enemies of God and His Prophet (sws) faced humiliation;how clearly God's faction prevailed over Satan's faction. If, even after this, some people are desirous of befriending the enemies of God, they should see what fate such an attitude would meet.

وَلَوْلَآ اَنْ كَتَبَ اللّٰهُ عَلَيْهِمُ الْجَلَآءَ لَعَذَّبَهُمْ فِي الدُّنْيَا ۭ وَلَهُمْ فِي الْاٰخِرَةِ عَذَابُ النَّارِ ۝[3]

The implication of the above verse is that the punishment of exile meted out to the Banū Naḍīr was in fact a show of lenience to them. God's wisdom entailed that no further punishment should be given to them so that if they have the ability to seek a lesson from this incident, they are provided with such an opportunity. Had it not been for this, the Almighty would have sent a decisive punishment on them in this world the way He did in the case of the 'Ād, the Thamūd and the Pharaoh etc, which totally ravaged and destroyed them.

The words وَلَهُمْ فِي الْاٰخِرَةِ عَذَابُ النَّارِ imply that if this lenience could not induce them to mend their ways, then their punishment will not be confined to exile only; in the Hereafter, they will have to face the torment of Hell, which will more than balance the lenience shown.

ذٰلِكَ بِاَنَّهُمْ شَاۗقُّوا اللّٰهَ وَرَسُوْلَهٗ ۚ وَمَنْ يُّشَاۗقِّ اللّٰهَ فَاِنَّ اللّٰهَ شَدِيْدُ الْعِقَابِ ۝[4]

It is the practice of God that those who rise against Him and His prophets face severe punishment.

An important point to note in this verse is that the word وَرَسُوْلَهٗ has been suppressed after وَ مَنْ يُّشَاۗقِّ اللّٰهَ, which indicates that showing enmity to the Prophet (sws) is tantamount to showing enmity to God, and he, who rises against God, may well contemplate the consequences.

Section II: Verses (5-10)

In this section, which forms a parenthetical sentence and is a digression from the main topic, certain objections regarding the Banū Naḍīr incident raised by the Jews and the hypocrites are answered.

One of the objections raised by the Jews was that Muslims had chopped off many trees which had borne fruit. Though these trees had been cut for war purposes, the Jews tried to portray the incident as spreading anarchy in the land, even though

3. And had God not destined exile for them, He would have surely punished them in this world and in the Hereafter for them is the torment of Hell.

4. This is because of their crime of pitting themselves against God and His messenger. Those who set themselves against God, then God is stern in retribution.

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Muslims acclaim to be reformers. The purpose behind this objection was to cast doubts on the message of Islam in the eyes of people: that the Prophet (sws)'s call was not that of religion; it is a mere tussle to attain political authority; the name of religion is being taken in this campaign, God forbid, only to deceive people. An answer to a similar objection raised by the People of the Book is mentioned in Sūrah al-Ḥadīd earlier.

The second question was raised by the hypocrites regarding the left-behind assets and wealth of Banū Naḍīr: they demanded that like the four-fifth share reserved for the soldiers from the spoils of war, these assets and wealth left behind should also be distributed in this same ratio to the army. However, the Qur'ān regarded this wealth to be *fay* and not spoils of war, and directed that all of it be consigned to the public treasury for the poor and indigent, and especially for the help of those Muhājirūn who were driven out from their homes and deprived of their assets and property merely because of their religion. In this regard, the Anṣār and the early Muhājirūn are praised for their sacrifice and contentment: they are very generous for their immigrant brothers, and give preference to their needs over their own. Only this attitude is befitting for the believers.

Text and Translation

مَا قَطَعْتُمْ مِّنْ لِّيْنَةٍ اَوْ تَرَكْتُمُوْهَا قَآىِٕمَةً عَلٰٓى اُصُوْلِهَا فَبِاِذْنِ اللّٰهِ وَلِيُخْزِيَ الْفٰسِقِيْنَ ۝ وَمَآ اَفَآءَ اللّٰهُ عَلٰى رَسُوْلِهٖ
مِنْهُمْ فَمَآ اَوْجَفْتُمْ عَلَيْهِ مِنْ خَيْلٍ وَّلَا رِكَابٍ وَّلٰكِنَّ اللّٰهَ يُسَلِّطُ رُسُلَهٗ عَلٰى مَنْ يَّشَآءُ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ عَلٰى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيْرٌ ۝ مَآ
اَفَآءَ اللّٰهُ عَلٰى رَسُوْلِهٖ مِنْ اَهْلِ الْقُرٰى فَلِلّٰهِ وَلِلرَّسُوْلِ وَلِذِي الْقُرْبٰى وَالْيَتٰمٰى وَالْمَسٰكِيْنِ وَابْنِ السَّبِيْلِ ۙ كَيْ لَا يَكُوْنَ
دُوْلَةً بَيْنَ الْاَغْنِيَآءِ مِنْكُمْ ؕ وَمَآ اٰتٰىكُمُ الرَّسُوْلُ فَخُذُوْهُ ۗ وَمَا نَهٰىكُمْ عَنْهُ فَانْتَهُوْا ۚ وَاتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ شَدِيْدُ
الْعِقَابِ ۝ لِلْفُقَرَآءِ الْمُهٰجِرِيْنَ الَّذِيْنَ اُخْرِجُوْا مِنْ دِيَارِهِمْ وَاَمْوَالِهِمْ يَبْتَغُوْنَ فَضْلًا مِّنَ اللّٰهِ وَرِضْوَانًا وَّيَنْصُرُوْنَ
اللّٰهَ وَرَسُوْلَهٗ ؕ اُولٰٓئِكَ هُمُ الصّٰدِقُوْنَ ۝ وَالَّذِيْنَ تَبَوَّؤُ الدَّارَ وَالْاِيْمَانَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ يُحِبُّوْنَ مَنْ هَاجَرَ اِلَيْهِمْ وَلَا يَجِدُوْنَ
فِيْ صُدُوْرِهِمْ حَاجَةً مِّمَّآ اُوْتُوْا وَيُؤْثِرُوْنَ عَلٰٓى اَنْفُسِهِمْ وَلَوْ كَانَ بِهِمْ خَصَاصَةٌ ۚ وَمَنْ يُّوْقَ شُحَّ نَفْسِهٖ فَاُولٰٓئِكَ هُمُ
الْمُفْلِحُوْنَ ۝ وَالَّذِيْنَ جَآءُوْ مِنْۢ بَعْدِهِمْ يَقُوْلُوْنَ رَبَّنَا اغْفِرْ لَنَا وَلِاِخْوَانِنَا الَّذِيْنَ سَبَقُوْنَا بِالْاِيْمَانِ وَلَا تَجْعَلْ فِيْ
قُلُوْبِنَا غِلًّا لِّلَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا رَبَّنَآ اِنَّكَ رَءُوْفٌ رَّحِيْمٌ ۝

The palm trees you cut down or spared was because of God's directive and so that He may humiliate the evil-doers. (5)

And whatever God returned from them to His Messenger, you spurred neither horse, nor camel to capture them; it is, in fact, God, who gives messengers authority over whom He desires. And God has power over all things. Whatever God returns from the town-dwellers to His Messenger, is for God, the Messenger, the kinsfolk, the orphans,

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the destitute and the traveller, so that it does not circulate only in the rich among you. And whatever the Messenger gives you, accept it, and whatever he forbids you, abstain from it. And fear God. Indeed, God is stern in retribution. This is especially for those needy immigrants, who were driven from their homes and their possessions, while they were seeking God's bounty and pleasure and while they were helping God and His Messenger. These are, in fact, the truthful. (6-8)

And those who already have a place of residence and have firmly rooted their faith befriend those who are migrating to them, and do not feel any ill-will for what is being given to them, and they give them preference over themselves, even though they are in want. And those have been protected from greed, shall, in fact succeed. (9)

And those who come after them, pray: "Lord! Forgive us and also forgive our brothers who embraced faith before us and let not malice arise in our hearts for the believers. Lord! You are indeed very Compassionate and Merciful." (10)

Explanation

مَا قَطَعْتُمْ مِّنْ لِّيْنَةٍ اَوْ تَرَكْتُمُوْهَا قَآىِٕمَةً عَلٰٓى اُصُوْلِهَا فَبِاِذْنِ اللّٰهِ وَلِيُخْزِيَ الْفٰسِقِيْنَ ۝[5]

The word لِّيْنَةٌ refers to a fruit-laden palm tree. The verse timely answers a question raised by the Jews. When Muslims attacked the Banū Naḍīr, they chopped off some trees from their orchards, keeping in view the needs and requirements of the battle. The Jews used this incident to launch a propaganda against Islam. They declared that Muslims who claim to be reformers in the land have ruined their orchards by chopping off good quality fruit-laden palm trees; how can such an act be regarded under reform; it is purely an act of spreading disorder in the land.

There was no apparent need to mention اَوْ تَرَكْتُمُوْهَا قَآىِٕمَةً, since the objection pertained to striking down the trees and not leaving some of them intact. However, this mention sheds light on a particular aspect of the objection, which could not have been done without its mention: when they had raised this objection, then, in order to make it more effective, they must have also said that if Muslims required wood for an immediate and temporary war need, they could have struck down such and such trees which would not have caused much loss; however, they left intact those trees and chopped off the fruit-laden ones, which shows that they did it out of revenge, rather than fulfilling any essential need. By indulging in it, they wanted to cause a financial loss, which is against the order and reform they claim of; it is nothing but spreading disorder in the land.

The words فَبِاِذْنِ اللّٰهِ answer the objection raised above; however, instead of being directed to those who had raised the objection, it is addressed to the Muslims only. They are told that they should not at all pay any attention to these "well-wishers" as to which

5. The palm trees you cut down or spared was because of God's directive and so that He may humiliate the evil-doers.

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of the trees should have been cut and which not; whatever they have done was done in the presence of the Prophet (sws) and at his behest, which, in other words, means that it was done on God's directive, and when it was done by God's permission, then no one knows more than Him about its wisdom and expediency, and whether this is an act of reform and order, or of anarchy and disorder.

The words وَلِيُخْزِيَ الْفٰسِقِيْنَ imply that this directive had been given to the Muslims, so that the Almighty humiliates those who break promises and are traitors, and they see with their own eyes that the trees they had sown with great passion and fervor, are being chopped off before their own eyes, while they watch helplessly. The word فَاسِقٌ here refers to a traitor and one who breaks promises, and it is used in this meaning at many places in the Qur'ān.

The reason that those who had raised the objection are not addressed directly is because the objection was absolutely unreasonable, raised only to vent emotions. For this reason, they were not worthy of being addressed. However, Muslims were addressed and their act was ratified so that this should inflict sorrow on the traitors and, at the same time, the hypocrites are delivered a warning, so that they do not make it a means of spreading evil suggestions in the society.

As far as the question that can Muslims ruin the orchards and crops of the enemy in times of war is concerned, it is not important at all. If the war requires that even their houses be razed to the ground, then they can do it, let alone orchards and crops; however, if there is no such need, then inflicting harm on the smallest of their assets is not allowed to the Muslims.

وَمَآ اَفَآءَ اللّٰهُ عَلٰى رَسُوْلِهٖ مِنْهُمْ فَمَآ اَوْجَفْتُمْ عَلَيْهِ مِنْ خَيْلٍ وَّلَا رِكَابٍ وَّلٰكِنَّ اللّٰهَ يُسَلِّطُ رُسُلَهٗ عَلٰى مَنْ يَّشَآءُ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ عَلٰى كُلِّ شَىْءٍ قَدِيْرٌ ۝[6]

This verse answers their second question which related to the assets and wealth left behind by the Banū Naḍīr, and which was propelled by the hypocrites because of their greed for wealth. They were of the opinion that this should also be regarded as wealth acquired from the enemy and therefore like the war booty, four-fifths of it should be distributed among the soldiers; a little earlier, precisely the same procedure had been adopted for the war booty obtained in the battle of Badr. However, the Qur'ān rejected their demand since there was a great difference in the two incidents. In the battle of Badr, soldiers had to engage in a formal war, which required use of their weapons, horses, camels, whereas, no such service was used in this case. The enemy assets were obtained merely because the enemy being terror-struck by the Prophet of God vacated their area. On the basis of this difference, it was directed that this wealth obtained was

6. And whatever God returned from them to His Messenger, you spurred neither horse nor camel to capture them; it is, in fact, God, who gives messengers authority over whom He desires. And God has power over all things.

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of the category of *fay* which the Almighty Himself gave to His Prophet (sws) from His enemies. Thus, all of it will belong to God and His Prophet (sws), or in other words to the Islamic state, and will be spent on the collective welfare of Islam and the Muslims.

From the words مَآ اَفَآءَ اللّٰهُ has sprung a permanent term in Islamic finance: the wealth of *fay*. It refers to the wealth obtained from the enemy without any war. The word *fay,* literally means "to return" ie. the Almighty returned this wealth to its rightful owners from those who had embezzled it.

It is evident from the words فَمَآ اَوْجَفْتُمْ عَلَيْهِ مِنْ خَيْلٍ وَّلَا رِكَابٍ that the share given to soldiers from the spoils of war was because they used their personal weapons, horses and camels in the war – so much so that they even had to arrange for their own food and other smaller provisions. Today, the situation has changed: whatever will now be obtained from the enemy will be regarded as *fay,* whether it is obtained through a war, or through a peace settlement.

What is stated in لٰكِنَّ اللّٰهَ يُسَلِّطُ رُسُلَهٗ عَلٰى مَنْ يَّشَآءُ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ عَلٰى كُلِّ شَىْءٍ قَدِيْرٌ is stated in Sūrah al-Mujādalah, the previous *sūrah*, in the following words: كَتَبَ اللّٰهُ لَاَغْلِبَنَّ اَنَا وَرُسُلِىْ.(۵۸:۲۱) (The Almighty has ordained: "I and My messengers shall always prevail," (58:21)). The Messenger of God does not need any help for this dominance except that of His God, and His God has power over all things. If He desires, He can have His Messenger prevail on the greatest countries of his enemies without any army. If He seeks help from the believers in this regard, then this does not mean that He is dependent on their help; one of His objectives is to grant them an opportunity to obtain His blessings and the second objective is to distinguish the sincere from the hypocrites.

مَآ اَفَآءَ اللّٰهُ عَلٰى رَسُوْلِهٖ مِنْ اَهْلِ الْقُرٰى فَلِلّٰهِ وَلِلرَّسُوْلِ وَلِذِى الْقُرْبٰى وَالْيَتٰمٰى وَالْمَسٰكِيْنِ وَابْنِ السَّبِيْلِ ۙ كَىْ لَا يَكُوْنَ دُوْلَةًۢ بَيْنَ الْاَغْنِيَآءِ مِنْكُمْ ؕ وَمَآ اٰتٰىكُمُ الرَّسُوْلُ فَخُذُوْهُ ۗ وَمَا نَهٰىكُمْ عَنْهُ فَانْتَهُوْا ۚ وَاتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ شَدِيْدُ الْعِقَابِ ۘ﴿۷﴾[7]

After making a distinction between the spoils of war and *fay*, this verse states the heads under which the latter can be spent. In other words, the soldiers will have no share in it. The heads which are mentioned are the same as have been mentioned in Sūrah al-Anfāl with regard to the spoils of war. For this reason, I will only allude to some specific issues which relate to them. Those who want to read more detail, should look up the exegesis of Sūrah al-Anfāl.

لِلّٰهِ وَلِلرَّسُوْلِ (for God and His prophet): As far as God is concerned, He is not in need of any person's wealth or property. The share allocated for Him, in fact, returns to His servants, and an Islamic government, in its capacity of its custodian and trustee, spends it on the needy and on the collective welfare of the Muslims.

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7. Whatever God returns from the town-dwellers to His Messenger is for God, the Messenger, the kinsfolk, the orphans, the destitute and the traveller, so that it does not circulate only in the rich among you. And whatever the Messenger gives you, accept it, and whatever he forbids you, abstain from it. And fear God. Indeed, God is stern in retribution.

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Similarly the share of the Prophet (sws) mentioned in it is not allocated to him because of his status of a Prophet; it is allocated to him in his capacity as the head of an Islamic state. In the capacity of a prophet, the Almighty had taken upon Himself to financially provide for Him as is specified in the Qur'ān. However, when an Islamic state came into being, the burden of running it also rested on his shoulders, and in this situation, it became essential that he be provided for from the national treasury. Since this right of the Prophet (sws) was in his capacity of head of state, hence, after his demise, it was diverted to the ruler of the Muslims. It was not of the nature of any personal possessions, and the question of its distribution among his heirs as his legacy should, therefore, never arise. The legacy of the prophets of God is religion and not that of wealth and property.

وَ لِذِی الْقُرْبٰی (and for the relatives): This refers to those relatives of the Prophet (sws) to whom he was responsible to provide for financially. This expense in fact related to his person. It was not of the category of any personal possessions, which should have gone to his family after his demise. Just as no one has any monopoly on Islam, in a similar way, neither did a particular family ever hold a monopoly on the public treasury, nor can it ever do so. Such baseless notions were spread among the Muslims by certain miscreants who were under the influence of the Jews.

The mention of the orphans, the indigent and the travellers, immediately after a mention of the Prophet's relatives, sheds light on their status, for it is the Almighty who has stated their rights immediately after stating those of the Prophet's relatives. The primary responsibility of an Islamic government is the financial responsibility of those who have no means in the society. Other obligations of the state come after this. If a government disregards this primary responsibility by spending the public treasury on other requirements, then, even though these requirements may be important to welfare and to society, however, the government will be regarded as guilty of usurping the rights of the rightful. There is absolutely no allowance to an Islamic government to spend a single penny on luxuries and needless things. A government who indulges in such things is not an Islamic government; it is a satanic government. It is because of such governments that the world was inflicted by the scourge called socialism which rendered the concept of private ownership a crime – in fact, the foundation of all crimes. In order to uproot this crime, it caused great bloodshed in the world.

The word دُولَةً used in the clause كَیْ لَا یَکُوْنَ دُوْلَةً بَیْنَ الْاَغْنِیَآءِ مِنْکُمْ means "circulation." The expression دالت الایّام would mean دار الزمان (times changed). The word مداولت is from this root and used in the Qur'ān thus: وَ تِلْکَ الْاَیَّامُ نُدَاوِلُهَا بَیْنَ النَّاسِ (We alternate these vicissitudes among mankind, (3:140)). The implication is that the share of the poor, the orphans and the resourceless has been fixed in the public treasury so that wealth does not keep circulating among the rich and is in fact provided a route to the poor.

A principle of Islamic economics which becomes evident from this is that Islam does not want wealth to just circulate in one section of a society; it wants that it should

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also flow to those sections of the society which are incapable of acquiring it because of their physical handicaps or a constraint in their resources. For this purpose, Islam has urged Muslims to spend as much as they can in the way of God, and has regarded this spending with their freedom of will to be the greatest means for this spiritual advancement. It has also bound a person who possesses a certain amount of wealth to give to the government a certain prescribed portion as a right of the poor.

The words وَمَآ اٰتٰىكُمُ الرَّسُوْلُ فَخُذُوْهُ ۗ وَمَا نَهٰىكُمْ عَنْهُ فَانْتَهُوْا ۚ وَاتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ ۭ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ شَدِيْدُ الْعِقَابِ at the end, sound a warning: whatever the Prophet (sws) gives them should be taken and whatever he stops them from, should be abstained from. They must not make anything an excuse for an objection or a whispering campaign, and should keep fearing God and remember that He is stern in retribution.

This warning and admonition bear evidence that the answers to the questions which have been given here had been raised by the hypocrites, and they were not raised to investigate the issue; they were only raised by them as an objection – something which was their habit. Had these questions been raised by sincere Muslims, there was no reason for this warning verse to come at the end.

Though the status of a messenger stated here "whatever he gives, take it and whatever he stops you from should be abstained from," has a specific context, yet the principle which can be derived from it is absolutely general. The implication is that in every affair of life, the Prophet (sws) shall be obeyed without showing any hesitancy, because the status of a messenger is that of a divinely appointed guide who has to be obeyed at all costs, as is specified by the Qur'ān: وَمَآ اَرْسَلْنَا مِنْ رَّسُوْلٍ اِلَّا لِيُطَاعَ بِاِذْنِ اللّٰهِ (٦٤:٤) (We send forth messengers, so that men should obey them by God's permission, (4:64)). In other words, this section of verses will have two meanings: one specific and the other general. As far as its specific meaning is concerned, it will relate to its previous verses, and as regards its general meaning, it will occupy the status of an all-embracing principle of the *sharī'ah*.

لِلْفُقَرَاۗءِ الْمُهٰجِرِيْنَ الَّذِيْنَ اُخْرِجُوْا مِنْ دِيَارِهِمْ وَاَمْوَالِهِمْ يَبْتَغُوْنَ فَضْلًا مِّنَ اللّٰهِ وَرِضْوَانًا وَّيَنْصُرُوْنَ اللّٰهَ وَرَسُوْلَهٗ ۭ اُولٰۗىِٕكَ هُمُ الصّٰدِقُوْنَ ۝[8]

After a mention of the general head in which the wealth of *fay* shall be spent, mentioned here is a specific head which was the most important one, keeping in view the circumstances of those times, and required equal attention of all the Muslims: helping the immigrants, who, at that time, were abandoning their homes and coming to Madīnah from all places. It is obvious that it was the responsibility of the small

8. This is especially for those needy immigrants who were driven from their homes and their possessions, while they were seeking God's bounty and pleasure and while they were helping God and His Messenger. These are the truthful.

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state of Madīnah that was in its early stages of development to settle these immigrants once again and to financially cater for their needs. It was a requirement of these circumstances that the wealth of *fay* be given in the custody of the Islamic government so that it is provided with resources to look after these collective needs.

While describing these immigrants, it is said that they were driven out of their homes and properties, and they bore this dispossession to seek God's bounty and pleasure, and to help Him and His Prophet (sws). For this reason, they are worthy of being helped by their religious fraternity with generosity and contentment of heart. The words يَبْتَغُوْنَ فَضْلًا مِّنَ اللّٰهِ allude to the provision of faith and belief they had in God, on the basis of which they vacated their houses and properties without even caring if they had any place to seek shelter in. The words وَ يَنْصُرُوْنَ اللّٰهَ وَ رَسُوْلَهٗ refer to the great objective for which they undertook this major step: they wanted to remain alongside the Prophet (sws), so that they are always ready to lend support and help to God and His Prophet (sws).

The words اُولٰٓئِكَ هُمُ الصّٰدِقُوْنَ state that it is these people who are truthful in their claim to faith, for they sacrificed everything they had, to win the pleasure of God and to support His Prophet (sws). The implication is that these hypocrites are not truthful, who, though lay claim to faith but are not ready to bear the slightest loss in the way of God. They only want that they be provided with comfort and tasty food right in their homes. It is about these hypocrites that it is said in verse 11 of this *sūrah*: وَاللّٰهُ يَشْهَدُ اِنَّهُمْ لَكٰذِبُوْنَ (and God bears witness that these hypocrites are absolute liars)

وَالَّذِيْنَ تَبَوَّؤُ الدَّارَ وَالْاِيْمَانَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ يُحِبُّوْنَ مَنْ هَاجَرَ اِلَيْهِمْ وَلَا يَجِدُوْنَ فِيْ صُدُوْرِهِمْ حَاجَةً مِّمَّآ اُوْتُوْا وَيُؤْثِرُوْنَ عَلٰٓى اَنْفُسِهِمْ وَلَوْ كَانَ بِهِمْ خَصَاصَةٌ ۭ وَمَنْ يُّوْقَ شُحَّ نَفْسِهٖ فَاُولٰٓئِكَ هُمُ الْمُفْلِحُوْنَ ۝[9]

The verse showers praise on the contentment and generosity shown by the Anṣār and the earliest Muhājirūn (immigrants): they do not feel any resentment that the immigrants have come over to them in multitudes, in order to have share in their spoils and wealth of *fay*. On the contrary, they welcome them with a big heart and have no feelings of envy for the help which is being offered to these immigrants; moreover, they do not give preference to their own selves even though they are in need too.

The expression وَالَّذِيْنَ تَبَوَّؤُ الدَّارَ وَالْاِيْمَانَ is similar to عَلّفته تبناء وماء or زججن الحواجب والعيونا or to قلّدنی سیفا ورمحا. In such expressions, a verb which is appropriate for the second object is suppressed and this suppression can be understood from intrinsic indications. Consequently, in each of the above mentioned expressions, a verb is suppressed.

9. And those who already have a place of residence and have firmly rooted their faith, befriend those who are migrating to them, and do not feel any ill-will for what is being given to them, and they give them preference over themselves, even though they are in want. And those have been protected from greed shall, in fact, succeed.

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Similarly, in the Qur'ānic expression under discussion, a verb which is appropriate for the word اَلْاِيْمَانَ is suppressed. If a verb such as اَحْكَمُوا is considered to be suppressed, then the whole expression would be: وَالَّذِينَ تَبَوَّؤُوا الدَّارَ وَ اَحْكَمُوا وَ الْاِيْمَانَ (those who already have a place of residence and have also firmly rooted their faith).

The foremost implied by these words are obviously the Anṣār because they already had houses and were also blessed with faith; however, in my opinion, also included are the earliest Muhājirūn who had already reached Madīnah, and the Almighty had created for them a satisfactory means of livelihood. The words مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ induce me to make this interpretation. The reason is that it is the status of the earliest Muhājirūn, according to which they outdid the later Muhājirūn in embracing faith and in migration. As far as the Anṣār are concerned, they were ahead, no doubt, of others in having homes; however, it would not be correct to say that they were ahead of all the Muhājirūn in embracing faith. What can be said at best, is that they were generally ahead of the later Muhājirūn; however, if the early Muhājirūn are also included with the Anṣār then the words وَ الَّذِيْنَ تَبَوَّؤُ الدَّارَ وَ الْاِيْمَانَ are very apt. The reason is that both of them are collectively ahead of the later ones, as far as having homes and embracing faith are concerned.

The verse says that these people hold the new Muhājirūn to be very dear to them, and welcome them with a large heart. They are not bothered at all at the Muhājirūn coming to them in multitudes, and as a result, the wealth which was to be given to them is being given to these Muhājirīn, or that these Muhājirīn will now have a share in them. On the contrary, with great contentment, they are giving preference to their needs over their own.

The purpose behind praising them is to highlight the fact that the believers should be sympathetic, generous and altruistic to each other. It is a subtle comment on the hypocrites, who had raised a demand regarding the left-over wealth and property of the Banū Naḍīr, that this wealth be distributed as spoils of war. They are shown, by this comparison, of how a Muslim is generous for his fellow Muslim so that these hypocrites may feel ashamed.

The words وَمَنْ يُّوْقَ شُحَّ نَفْسِهٖ فَاُولٰٓئِكَ هُمُ الْمُفْلِحُوْنَ give glad tidings of success to the Anṣār and the Muhājirūn, and also inform us of a very dangerous spiritual ailment. The word شُحٌّ means "greed and avarice." By attributing it to the soul, it becomes evident that it is one of the cravings found in it; however, since the verse tells us to abstain from it, it means that it is a dangerous craving. If a person is not able to control it, it will ruin his Hereafter. This section of verses tells the hypocrites that they are inflicted with this malady. If they did not mend their ways, they will be eternally doomed. In order to allude to this dangerous aspect, I have translated it as "selfishness." A narrative has explained it thus:[10]

10. Abū 'Abd al-Rahmān Ahmad ibn Shu'ayb al-Nasā'ī, *Al-Sunan al-kubrā*, 1st ed., vol. 6

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وإياكم والشح فإنه أهلك من كان قبلكم أمرهم بالظلم فظلموا وأمرهم بالفجور ففجروا وأمرهم بالقطيعة فقطعوا

Abstain from selfishness. It is this which has destroyed the nations before you. It induced them to tyranny and they became tyrannical; it induced them to sin and defiance, and they became defiant and sinful; it induced them to sever blood-relationships and they severed blood-relationships.

An important question which arises on the placement and occasion of this verse is its purpose. Our exegetes are of the opinion that just as the previous verses state that the Muhājirūn also have a share in the wealth of *fay*, in a similar manner this verse states that the Anṣār, too, have a share in it. However, I am unable to understand this. The Muhajirūn were mentioned because it was due to them that the government was facing a delicate situation which needed financial help. In other words, they were mentioned as the reason because of which the *fay* wealth was to be share of the government only. What was the reason of mentioning the Anṣār in this regard? No one had any doubt that the Anṣār did not have any share in this wealth. When the share of all the orphans, poor and the indigent has been stated, it is obvious that the poor and the indigent belonging to the Anṣār were also included. So what was the need to specially mention the Anṣār, and that too, with the attribute وَ الَّذِيْنَ تَبَوَّؤُ الدَّارَ وَ الْاِيْمَانَ, which does not refer to their need; it in fact refers them to be without any need.

In my opinion, the exegetes have been unable to grasp the occasion and placement of this verse. It has no bearing on whether the Anṣār have any share in the wealth of *fay* or not. Neither was this question found in the minds of anyone nor was there any reason for it to arise in the minds and obviously there was no need to answer it. What is actually mentioned here is that the Anṣār and the early Muhājirūn, who already have homes and have also embraced faith, do not regard their brothers who are migrating to them as a financial threat like these hypocrites do; they, in fact, welcome them with affection, and are ready for any sacrifice that is needed from them, and it is this attitude which the brotherhood of their faith truly entails which every Muslim should adopt.

وَ الَّذِيْنَ جَآءُوْ مِنْۢ بَعْدِهِمْ يَقُوْلُوْنَ رَبَّنَا اغْفِرْ لَنَا وَ لِاِخْوَانِنَا الَّذِيْنَ سَبَقُوْنَا بِالْاِيْمَانِ وَ لَا تَجْعَلْ فِيْ قُلُوْبِنَا غِلًّا لِّلَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا رَبَّنَآ اِنَّكَ رَءُوْفٌ رَّحِيْمٌ ﴿١٠﴾[11]

After a mention of the attitude of the Anṣār and the early Muhājirūn, mentioned in this verse is the attitude of the later Muhājirūn: they, too, are very sincere and affectionate to those of their brethren who embraced faith before them and also

(Beirut: Dār al-kutub al-'ilmiyyah, 1991), 486.

11. And those who come after them pray: "Lord! Forgive us and also forgive our brothers who embraced faith before us, and let not malice arise in our hearts for the believers. Lord! You are indeed very Compassionate and Merciful."

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migrated before them. They are not envious of the fact that they have taken into possession all available means and resources and have also become owners of homes, whilst they are deprived of everything. Moreover, they, very sincerely, pray for their brothers: "Lord! Forgive us also and also these brothers of ours who have preceded us in embracing faith and in migration. And Lord! Let not any malice arise in our hearts against our believing brothers. Lord! You are very Compassionate and Merciful."

A subtle indication is found in the words وَلَا تَجْعَلْ فِيْ قُلُوْبِنَا غِلًّا لِّلَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا of the prayer expressed by these later Muhājirūn. It can be unfolded thus: "Lord! This should not happen that once we see them in comfort and ease which we do not have, Satan induce in us envy and jealousy for them. Lord! On the contrary, with your grace and blessing, let our hearts be filled with love and affection for them."

Here one should keep in mind the malady of selfishness mentioned earlier by the word شُحَّ. What is implied is that in contrast, these truthful and righteous people are absolutely devoid of such maladies.

Section III: Verses (7-11)

It seems that even after witnessing the fate of the Banū Naḍīr these friends of the Jews – the hypocrites – did not learn a lesson. After that they started to encourage and embolden the Banū Qurayẓah. It was only this tribe which was left near Madīnah after the Banū Naḍīr. After what happened to the Banū Naḍīr, quite naturally they must have started to fear that it was soon to be their turn next. It is possible that they had begun conspiring with their sympathizers. The hypocrites, too, must have urged them to not surrender themselves to fear and must have told them that if, like the Banū Naḍīr, they too are driven out, they (the hypocrites) will support them and will not care about anything which ensues about them from Muḥammad (sws) and his companions. And, if the situation of war arises, they will go all out fighting for them. The Qur'ān assured the Muslims that these hypocrites are absolute cowards and liars. They will neither accompany anyone in exile, nor in war and, even if they lend support in war, they will be routed and will not be able to show their face to anyone. At the same time, the Banū Qurayẓah were warned that if they were lured by these hypocrites, they will meet the same fate as that of the Banū Naḍīr. These hypocrites will also dissociate themselves from them like Satan by saying: اِنِّيْ بَرِيْٓءٌ مِّنْكَ اِنِّيْٓ اَخَافُ اللّٰهَ رَبَّ الْعٰلَمِيْنَ. (١٦:٥٩) (I here and now disown you. I fear God, Lord of the Universe (59:16)).

Text and Translation

اَلَمْ تَرَ اِلَى الَّذِيْنَ نَافَقُوْا يَقُوْلُوْنَ لِاِخْوَانِهِمُ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا مِنْ اَهْلِ الْكِتٰبِ لَئِنْ اُخْرِجْتُمْ لَنَخْرُجَنَّ مَعَكُمْ وَلَا نُطِيْعُ فِيْكُمْ اَحَدًا اَبَدًا ۙ وَّاِنْ قُوْتِلْتُمْ لَنَنْصُرَنَّكُمْ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ يَشْهَدُ اِنَّهُمْ لَكٰذِبُوْنَ ﴿١١﴾ لَئِنْ اُخْرِجُوْا لَا يَخْرُجُوْنَ مَعَهُمْ ۚ وَلَئِنْ

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قُوْتِلُوْا لَا يَنْصُرُوْنَهُمْ ۚ وَلَئِنْ نَّصَرُوْهُمْ لَيُوَلُّنَّ الْاَدْبَارَ ۫ ثُمَّ لَا يُنْصَرُوْنَ ﴿١٢﴾ لَاَنْتُمْ اَشَدُّ رَهْبَةً فِيْ صُدُوْرِهِمْ مِّنَ اللّٰهِ ؕ ذٰلِكَ
بِاَنَّهُمْ قَوْمٌ لَّا يَفْقَهُوْنَ ﴿١٣﴾ لَا يُقَاتِلُوْنَكُمْ جَمِيْعًا اِلَّا فِيْ قُرًى مُّحَصَّنَةٍ اَوْ مِنْ وَّرَآءِ جُدُرٍ ؕ بَاْسُهُمْ بَيْنَهُمْ شَدِيْدٌ ؕ تَحْسَبُهُمْ
جَمِيْعًا وَّقُلُوْبُهُمْ شَتّٰى ؕ ذٰلِكَ بِاَنَّهُمْ قَوْمٌ لَّا يَعْقِلُوْنَ ﴿١٤﴾ كَمَثَلِ الَّذِيْنَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ قَرِيْبًا ذَاقُوْا وَبَالَ اَمْرِهِمْ ۚ وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ
اَلِيْمٌ ﴿١٥﴾ كَمَثَلِ الشَّيْطٰنِ اِذْ قَالَ لِلْاِنْسَانِ اكْفُرْ ۚ فَلَمَّا كَفَرَ قَالَ اِنِّيْ بَرِيْٓءٌ مِّنْكَ اِنِّيْٓ اَخَافُ اللّٰهَ رَبَّ الْعٰلَمِيْنَ ﴿١٦﴾ فَكَانَ
عَاقِبَتَهُمَآ اَنَّهُمَا فِي النَّارِ خَالِدَيْنِ فِيْهَا ؕ وَذٰلِكَ جَزٰٓؤُا الظّٰلِمِيْنَ ﴿١٧﴾

Have you not seen those incriminated with hypocrisy? They say to their fellow-disbelievers among the People of the Book: "If you are driven out, then we shall, at all cost, go out with you and we will not listen to anyone regarding you, and if war is waged against you, we will certainly help you." And God bears witness that they are absolute liars. If they are driven out, they will not go out with them, and, if they are attacked, they will not help them. And even if they help them, they will turn their backs and leave them in the lurch. (11-12)

Their dread of you is more intense in their hearts than their fear of God. The reason is that they are devoid of understanding. They will not unite in fighting against you in a field, except in fortified cities or from behind walls. Great is their enmity against one another. You regard them to be united, yet their hearts are divided. The reason is that they are not sensible. (13-14)

[Those whom they are luring] will end up with the same fate, as those who recently tasted the fruit of their own deeds, and a woeful punishment also awaits them. [These who are luring them], are like Satan who directs man: "Commit disbelief." Then when he commits disbelief, he says: "I here and now disown you. I fear God, Lord of the Universe." Therefore, the fate of both shall be Hell, where they will remain forever. And thus shall the wrongdoers be rewarded. (15-17)

Explanation

اَلَمْ تَرَ اِلَى الَّذِيْنَ نَافَقُوْا يَقُوْلُوْنَ لِاِخْوَانِهِمُ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا مِنْ اَهْلِ الْكِتٰبِ لَئِنْ اُخْرِجْتُمْ لَنَخْرُجَنَّ مَعَكُمْ وَلَا نُطِيْعُ
فِيْكُمْ اَحَدًا اَبَدًا ۙ وَّاِنْ قُوْتِلْتُمْ لَنَنْصُرَنَّكُمْ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ يَشْهَدُ اِنَّهُمْ لَكٰذِبُوْنَ ﴿١١﴾[12]

The address اَلَمْ تَرَ is meant to express wonder. The implication is: look at these people who claim to be believers; on the one hand, they claim to profess faith and on the other hand, are extending ties of friendship with the People of the Book, who have rejected the prophethood and message of Muhammad (sws).

12. Have you not seen those incriminated with hypocrisy? They say to their fellow-disbelievers among the People of the Book: "If you are driven out, then we shall, at all cost, go out with you, and we will not listen to anyone regarding you, and if war is waged against you, we will certainly help you." And God bears witness that they are absolute liars.

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It is evident from the word لِاِخْوَانِهِمْ that the hypocrites who have been mentioned here were the ones who had come from the Jews. For their own expediencies, they left the Jews but Judaism could not leave them. They were with the Muslims for their political and economic interests only; their real sympathies were with their own brethren. Here, it needs to be appreciated that most hypocrites were originally Jews, and it is their attitude which is under discussion in the previous *sūrahs.* Very few people from among the Ishmaelites who professed faith were among the hypocrites. Moreover, the nature of their hypocrisy was also different. In Sūrah al-Mumtaḥinah, the attitude of this group has been discussed.

People have found it difficult to determine the group among the Jews alluded to by the words الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا مِنْ اَهْلِ الْكِتٰبِ. However, I am fully satisfied that they refer to the Jews of Banū Qurayẓah. The reason for this is that only three big tribes lived near Madīnah: Banū Qaynuqā', Banū Naḍīr and Banū Qurayẓah. The Banū Qaynuqā' had already been exterminated. The fate of the Banū Naḍīr has been stated in this *sūrah.* Thus, the only tribe that remained was the Banū Qurayẓah which lived at a short distance from Madīnah. Thus, the connivance of the hypocrites mentioned here, can only relate to them. They were destroyed right after the Battle of the Trench, the details of which have already been mentioned in Sūrah al-Aḥzāb.

It is evident from the words لَئِنْ اُخْرِجْتُمْ لَنَخْرُجَنَّ مَعَكُمْ وَلَا نُطِيْعُ فِيْكُمْ اَحَدًا اَبَدًا ۙ وَّاِنْ قُوْتِلْتُمْ لَنَنْصُرَنَّكُمْ that the hypocrites started to assure the Banū Qurayẓah that if they, too, are driven out like the Banū Naḍīr, then they will go with them and will not accept any suggestion or command of anyone in this matter; if circumstances of war arise, they will support them. It is evident from this that the Banū Qurayẓah feared that soon it would be their turn and that they did not have much faith in the promises of these hypocrites. They knew that in the case of the Banū Nadīr, they had done practically nothing, in spite of giving their word. For this reason, the hypocrites had to go to great lengths to assure them that they will abide by their word in their case. They even told them that in this matter they will not care about anything. The reference was to the Prophet (sws) and the Muslims. The implication was that in order to honour their word, if they had to sever their relationship with them, they will do so.

It is evident from the words وَاللّٰهُ يَشْهَدُ اِنَّهُمْ لَكٰذِبُوْنَ that the Almighty has called them liars with the same oath and emphasis with which the hypocrites had assured them of their support. The words وَاللّٰهُ يَشْهَدُ imply an oath, as I have explained elsewhere.

لَئِنْ اُخْرِجُوْا لَا يَخْرُجُوْنَ مَعَهُمْ ۚ وَلَئِنْ قُوْتِلُوْا لَا يَنْصُرُوْنَهُمْ ۚ وَلَئِنْ نَّصَرُوْهُمْ لَيُوَلُّنَّ الْاَدْبَارَ ۫ ثُمَّ لَا يُنْصَرُوْنَ ﴿١٢﴾[13]

In this verse, the Qur'ān has refuted the pledge they had made: when the time comes, not even in one case will they abide by their word; if the Banū Qurayẓah are driven

13. If they are driven out, they will not go out with them and, if they are attacked, they will not help them. And even if they help them, they will turn their backs and leave them in the lurch.

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out, they will not go out with them; if they are attacked, then these hypocrites will not support them and if they do so, they will be ravaged and show their backs. Consequently, this is what happened exactly. No one helped them when it was needed. Their exemplary fate has already been detailed out in Sūrah al-Aḥzāb.

Here, one should keep this much in mind that like the Banū Naḍīr, they, too, had concluded a peace treaty with the Prophet (sws). At the time of the Battle of the Trench, Ḥuyy ibn Akhṭab, the famous hypocrite, induced them to violate this treaty. He advised them that since at that time the Quraysh and the Banū Ghaṭfān are attacking the Muslims with all their might, if they, too, join them in this onslaught, the Muslims would be totally exterminated. The result was that the Banū Qurayẓah were lured by him into breaking the treaty; it is well known what then happened in the Battle of Trench. Right after it, the Prophet (sws) advanced towards the Banū Qurayẓah and surrounded them. At that time, no one supported them. At last, they had to turn to Sa'd ibn Mu'ādh (rta) to decide their fate. The details of his verdict have been mentioned in Sūrah al-Aḥzāb. Through His hands, the Almighty totally routed them.

The words ثُمَّ لَا يُنْصَرُوْنَ imply that all hopes and expectations of help will end for them. It will be a decisive blow from God, and no help can avail those who are seized by the Almighty.

لَاَنْتُمْ اَشَدُّ رَهْبَةً فِيْ صُدُوْرِهِمْ مِّنَ اللّٰهِ ؕ ذٰلِكَ بِاَنَّهُمْ قَوْمٌ لَّا يَفْقَهُوْنَ ﴿۱۳﴾[14]

Muslims are told that these hypocrites will not dare support their brothers, because they dread the Muslims more than God. They oppose and disobey God secretly as well as openly, but they do not have the courage to rise against the Muslims.

The implication of the words ذٰلِكَ بِاَنَّهُمْ قَوْمٌ لَّا يَفْقَهُوْنَ is that it is indeed strange that a people be stubborn before God, and yet fear the Muslims; however, when people lose their senses, then this is what generally happens: instead of fearing the attacker they fear the weapons of attack. Had they even a slight glimmer of faith and a little common sense, they would have thought that when they have angered their real Master, for how many more days can they save themselves from the grasp of His servants and courtiers? Here, it needs to be understood that a heart is deprived of understanding obvious realities of sense and nature when, as a result of violation of obvious directives, the Almighty seals it. Thus, it was regarding these hypocrites that the Qur'ān at one place has remarked: ذٰلِكَ بِاَنَّهُمْ اٰمَنُوْا ثُمَّ كَفَرُوْا فَطُبِعَ عَلٰى قُلُوْبِهِمْ فَهُمْ لَا يَفْقَهُوْنَ. (۳:۶۳) (this is because they first embraced faith, then renounced their faith; so their hearts were sealed; thus they became devoid of understanding, (63:3)).

لَا يُقَاتِلُوْنَكُمْ جَمِيْعًا اِلَّا فِيْ قُرًى مُّحَصَّنَةٍ اَوْ مِنْ وَّرَآءِ جُدُرٍ ؕ بَاْسُهُمْ بَيْنَهُمْ شَدِيْدٌ ؕ تَحْسَبُهُمْ جَمِيْعًا وَّقُلُوْبُهُمْ شَتّٰى ؕ

14. Their dread of you is more intense in their hearts than their fear of God. The reason is that they are devoid of understanding.

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ذٰلِكَ بِاَنَّهُمْ قَوْمٌ لَّا يَعْقِلُوْنَ ﴿١٤﴾[15]

Muslims are urged not to pay heed to any of their bullying. They do not even have the courage to come out in the open and launch an organised army attack against them. They will not even have the courage to come out and defend themselves if they are attacked, let alone launching aggression by coming out in the open. They will remain confined to their houses and forts, and will try to defend themselves from behind their walls and barricades. It needs to be appreciated that only a defensive war can be fought if people remain confined to their barracks and forts. No offensive can be launched in this case in any way. Moreover, even with respect to defence, this is a weak and ineffective methodology. Only when there is no option should it be adopted. One must keep in mind regarding the Jews that they have always remained very cunning in inciting the Quraysh and its allies against the Muslims; however, they have never come out to fight in the open. Whenever Muslims have attacked them, they always tried to defend themselves while remaining confined to their forts. In this regard, they always failed and were, in fact, humiliated.

The words بَاْسُهُمْ بَيْنَهُمْ شَدِيْدٌ ؕ تَحْسَبُهُمْ جَمِيْعًا وَّ قُلُوْبُهُمْ شَتّٰى imply that how could they have the courage to fight in the open, when their hearts are divided? As far as their enmity with Islam is concerned, they are indeed united and this gives the false impression that their ideologies are the same; however, the real situation is absolutely different. Except for the opposition they have in common for Islam, their hearts have great spite and malice for one another. The various tribes of the Jews also have enmity between them and their friendship with the tribes of the Quraysh and the *mushrikūn* is also a pretentious display and only confined to opposition to Islam. How can such a frail and showy unity have the guts to give a tough fight in the open with people whose hearts have been united by faith by the Almighty?

The words ذٰلِكَ بِاَنَّهُمْ قَوْمٌ لَّا يَعْقِلُوْنَ refer to the real reason of their malady: they do not use their senses. In other words, instead of facing reality, assessing it seriously and facing it with determination and perseverance, they have become a slave to their desires. And when a people regard its desires instead of sense and reason to be its guide, then it is destroyed in this manner because of conflicting thoughts and ideas.

كَمَثَلِ الَّذِيْنَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ قَرِيْبًا ذَاقُوْا وَبَالَ اَمْرِهِمْ ۚ وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ اَلِيْمٌ ﴿١٥﴾[16]

This verse refers to the fate of those, whom these hypocrites were inciting. They had

15. They will not unite in fighting against you in a field, except in fortified cities or from behind walls. Great is their enmity against one another. You regard them to be united, yet their hearts are divided. The reason is that they are not sensible.

16. [Those whom they are luring], will end up with the same fate as those who recently tasted the fruit of their own deeds and a woeful punishment also awaits them.

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told these people that if they were driven out, they, too, would go out with them and, if they attack someone, they, too, will support them in this attack. The verse says that if these people, after being provoked by the hypocrites, take a wrong step, then they should remember that they will meet a fate no different from the one recently met by those who had done mischief.

People have generally taken the words اَلَّذِيْنَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ قَرِيْبًا ذَاقُوْا وَبَالَ اَمْرِهِمْ to refer to the Quraysh. In their opinion, they allude to the battle of Badr: just as the Quraysh were routed in Badr, in a similar manner, these people will be routed.

Though this allusion can be towards the Quraysh and also to the Banū Qaynuqa'; however, I have stated above that these verses mention the details of the conspiracy hatched by the hypocrites with the Banū Qurayẓah, once the Banū Naḍīr had been exiled. For this reason, I am of the opinion that these words refer to the Banū Naḍīr. The foremost reason for this is that it was, in fact, the latest incident, as is referred to by the words اَلَّذِيْنَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ قَرِيْبًا. Secondly, if any example could have been very effective for the Jews, then it could have been of another group of Jews.

The words وَ لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ اَلِيْمٌ signify that they will meet this fate in this world, and in the Hereafter they will have to face a grievous torment. It should remain evident here that the worldly fate of the Banū Qurayẓah was much more brutal that that of the Banū Naḍīr, and in the Hereafter too, only the Almighty knows what they are going to face.

كَمَثَلِ الشَّيْطٰنِ اِذْ قَالَ لِلْاِنْسَانِ اكْفُرْ ۚ فَلَمَّا كَفَرَ قَالَ اِنِّيْ بَرِيْٓءٌ مِّنْكَ اِنِّيْٓ اَخَافُ اللّٰهَ رَبَّ الْعٰلَمِيْنَ ﴿١٦﴾[17]

An example of the hypocrites who had provoked the Banū Qurayẓah is stated here. They had expressed that if the Banū Qurayẓah were driven out, they, too, would go out with them, and that if the Banū Qurayẓah attacked people, they would help them, and in this matter, they would not be pressurized by anyone. However, the fact is that they are Satan's brothers, and will adopt the same attitude as he adopts. Just as he allures man to disobey God, and when a person commits some sin as a result, he starts rebuking him by becoming his adviser and withdraws his support. Similarly, today, these hypocrites are encouraging and emboldening these people; however, once they take a step and its evil consequences come before them, then these "cheering" devils will turn and flee, and will never accept the responsibility of these consequences.

It is mentioned in verse 48 of Sūrah al-Anfāl, in the context of the battle of Badr that when the forces of the Quraysh and Muslims confronted one another, Satan, while praising the Quryash, fully encouraged them: لَا غَالِبَ لَكُمُ الْيَوْمَ مِنَ النَّاسِ وَاِنِّيْ جَارٌ لَّكُمْ. (٨:٤٨) (no one has the courage to vanquish you this day. I shall be at hand to help you, (8:48)). However, when both armies were engaged in battle, and the whole situation of the

17. [These, who are luring them] are like Satan who directs man: "Commit disbelief." Then when he commits disbelief, he says: "I here and now disown you. I fear God, Lord of the Universe."

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battlefield changed with the help of the angels, Satan changed his stance and remarked: اِنِّیْ بَرِیْٓءٌ مِّنْکُمْ اِنِّیْٓ اَرٰی مَا لَا تَرَوْنَ اِنِّیْٓ اَخَافُ اللّٰہَ ؕ وَاللّٰہُ شَدِیْدُ الْعِقَابِ. (٨:٤٨) (I am not responsible of the step you have taken, for I can see what you cannot. I fear God. God is stern in punishment, (8:48)).

I have already stated in the exegesis of Sūrah al-Anfāl that the battle of Badr took place because of a conspiracy of the Jews. It is they who incited the Quraysh and planned the onslaught for them. They also assured them of their help; however, when the time came, they disowned them like Satan.

It is mentioned at numerous places in the Qur'ān that when on the Day of Judgement the sinners will try to hold their satanic leaders responsible for their crimes, the leaders will openly say that they themselves were facing bad luck that they were followed by them. The leaders will go on to tell their followers that they had no authority over them that they should now be held responsible for their crimes; what they did, they did themselves and should now face the consequences.

In this world also, the agents of Satan behave no differently: they allure people into sin, but when the consequences come, they try to save themselves from taking their responsibility.

فَکَانَ عَاقِبَتَھُمَآ اَنَّھُمَا فِی النَّارِ خَالِدَیْنِ فِیْھَا ؕ وَذٰلِکَ جَزٰٓؤُا الظّٰلِمِیْنَ ﴿١٧﴾[18]

The implication of this verse is that once a crime has been committed, then trying to save one's own skin and blaming others for it has no benefit for either party: both end up in Hell eternally, and this is the fate of people who wrong their souls.

Section IV: Verses (18-24)

The *sūrah* ends on the succeeding verses. Though, by the words used, they address common Muslims, yet the direction of address is specifically towards the hypocrites. They are warned that the greatest issue which faces each person and needs his serious consideration is the nature and extent of his preparation for the day of accountability that is soon to come. The Almighty is fully aware of the deeds and practices of a person. He will reward each person for each of his deeds. At the same time, they are warned that they must not forget God the way the Jews had. Those who forget Him, harm Him in no way; they, in fact, become blind to their own good and evil. They should remember that the difference between the dwellers of Paradise and the dwellers of Hell shall not be small so that it may be disregarded because of lethargy and laziness; the difference, in fact, will be huge. Only the dwellers of Paradise will attain success and salvation. Others

18. Therefore, the fate of both shall be Hell, where they will remain forever. And thus shall the wrongdoers be rewarded.

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will face nothing but eternal loss and failure.

The hypocrites are also informed that as far as conclusively communicating the truth to them is concerned, it has been well and truly been accomplished and people have been left with no excuse to deny it. Had this Qur'ān, which is being recited to them, been revealed on a mountain, it would have been crushed to pieces because of God's fear, in spite of its resilience and toughness. People, whose hearts are not affected by it, should remember that the fault does not lie with the Qur'ān; it is their own hard-heartedness which is to be blamed for it. Such callous people are not influenced by anyone.

At the end, people are urged to reflect on the attributes of God. While deliberating on them they should assess and evaluate their present and future, their good and evil, their beliefs and deeds and their fate and outcome. They should bring their inner and outer-selves in harmony with the requirements of these attributes and develop them. If they do not do so, they will make their own existence a curse for themselves.

Readers may now go on to read the coming verses.

Text and Translation

يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ وَلْتَنْظُرْ نَفْسٌ مَّا قَدَّمَتْ لِغَدٍ ۚ وَاتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ ۭ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ خَبِيْرٌۢ بِمَا تَعْمَلُوْنَ ﴿۱۸﴾ وَلَا تَكُوْنُوْا
كَالَّذِيْنَ نَسُوا اللّٰهَ فَاَنْسٰىهُمْ اَنْفُسَهُمْ ۭ اُولٰۗىِٕكَ هُمُ الْفٰسِقُوْنَ ﴿۱۹﴾ لَا يَسْتَوِيْٓ اَصْحٰبُ النَّارِ وَاَصْحٰبُ الْجَنَّةِ ۭ اَصْحٰبُ الْجَنَّةِ
هُمُ الْفَاۗىِٕزُوْنَ ﴿۲۰﴾ لَوْ اَنْزَلْنَا هٰذَا الْقُرْاٰنَ عَلٰي جَبَلٍ لَّرَاَيْتَهٗ خَاشِعًا مُّتَصَدِّعًا مِّنْ خَشْيَةِ اللّٰهِ ۭ وَتِلْكَ الْاَمْثَالُ نَضْرِبُهَا
لِلنَّاسِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَفَكَّرُوْنَ ﴿۲۱﴾ هُوَ اللّٰهُ الَّذِيْ لَآ اِلٰهَ اِلَّا هُوَ ۚ عٰلِمُ الْغَيْبِ وَالشَّهَادَةِ ۚ هُوَ الرَّحْمٰنُ الرَّحِيْمُ ﴿۲۲﴾ هُوَ اللّٰهُ
الَّذِيْ لَآ اِلٰهَ اِلَّا هُوَ ۚ اَلْمَلِكُ الْقُدُّوْسُ السَّلٰمُ الْمُؤْمِنُ الْمُهَيْمِنُ الْعَزِيْزُ الْجَبَّارُ الْمُتَكَبِّرُ ۭ سُبْحٰنَ اللّٰهِ عَمَّا يُشْرِكُوْنَ ﴿۲۳﴾ هُوَ
اللّٰهُ الْخَالِقُ الْبَارِئُ الْمُصَوِّرُ لَهُ الْاَسْمَاۗءُ الْحُسْنٰى ۭ يُسَبِّحُ لَهٗ مَا فِي السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ ۚ وَهُوَ الْعَزِيْزُ الْحَكِيْمُ ﴿۲۴﴾

Believers! Fear God and let every soul fully evaluate what he has done for tomorrow. And fear God; indeed, God is aware of all your deeds. And be not like those who forgot God, so God made them forget themselves. Such people are the real disobedient. (18-19)

The companions of Hell and the companions of Paradise shall not be held equal. The companions of Paradise alone shall succeed. (20)

Had We bought down this Qur'ān on a mountain, you would have seen it humble itself and break asunder for fear of God, and We mention such parables for people so that they may think. (21)

He is God, besides whom there is no other deity. He knows the unseen and the seen. He is the Compassionate, the Merciful. (22)

He is God, besides whom there is no other deity. He is the Sovereign Lord, the Holy One, the Giver of Peace, the Giver of Refuge, the Guardian, the Mighty One, the All-

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Powerful, the Most High! Exalted be God above their idols! (23)

He is God, the Creator, the Originator, the Modeller. His are the most gracious attributes. All that is in the heavens and the earth gives glory to Him. And He is the Mighty, the Wise One. (24)

Explanation

يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ وَلْتَنْظُرْ نَفْسٌ مَّا قَدَّمَتْ لِغَدٍ ۚ وَاتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ ۭ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ خَبِيْرٌۢ بِمَا تَعْمَلُوْنَ ﴿١٨﴾[19]

Though the words used seemingly address common Muslims, however, their context and placement show that they are directed primarily at the hypocrites whose weaknesses are under discussion from the beginning of this *sūrah*. At the end, their attention is being directed to the fundamental reality, indifference to which is the primary cause of all spiritual ailments, and whose remedy is the sole remedy of all intellectual, spiritual and moral ailments. Believers should continue to asses what deeds they have done in preparation of the imminent Day of Judgement. The emphasis on fearing God is to warn people that they should not remain in the misconception that this world is a place of merriment and amusement which will suddenly end. It will not end like this; it will be followed by a day of reward and punishment which is bound to come.

The Hereafter is signified by the word "tomorrow." The reason is to refer to its proximity and certainty so that people should not delay their self-accountability. They should not leave this to the end to contemplate because that day is not far off. Just as tomorrow follows today, this day is at hand.

In the part of the verse: وَاتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ ۭ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ خَبِيْرٌۢ بِمَا تَعْمَلُوْنَ, the word وَاتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ is repeated in order to direct attention to the importance of the issue. After that, they are reminded that they should not remain in the misconception that God is unaware of their deeds. He is well aware of each of their words and deeds. For this reason, it is in their own benefit that whatever they do, they should realize that it is in God's knowledge, and one day they will be rewarded or punished for it.

وَلَا تَكُوْنُوْا كَالَّذِيْنَ نَسُوا اللّٰهَ فَاَنْسٰىهُمْ اَنْفُسَهُمْ ۭ اُولٰۗىِٕكَ هُمُ الْفٰسِقُوْنَ ﴿١٩﴾[20]

The verse tells them that they should not become like those who forgot God, so God made them forget their fate. The words كَالَّذِيْنَ نَسُوا اللّٰهَ refer to the Jews. They were the guides of these hypocrites. The Qur'ān has informed them that if, like the Jews, they too forget God, they should remember that they will not harm God in any way; they will only ruin themselves.

The words فَاَنْسٰىهُمْ اَنْفُسَهُمْ direct attention to a very important reality: those who forget

19. Believers! Fear God and let every soul fully evaluate what he has done for tomorrow. And fear God; indeed, God is aware of all your deeds.

20. And be not like those who forgot God, so God made them forget themselves. Such people are the real disobedient.

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God become indifferent to their own good and evil and to their fate. All value, significance and majesty of life depends on understanding the reality that the Almighty has not given it to us to indulge in a few days of luxury; He has given it to us so that we spend it in obedience to Him, and earn the eternal kingdom of heaven. This pinnacle can of course be achieved by someone who always keeps in mind that he has not been given life by chance; on the contrary, it is a blessing of a Gracious Being and He has given it with a special purpose. If a person leads his life in accordance with this special purpose, it will be a great eternal reward for him, and if he forgets this, it will automatically become an eternal curse for him.

The words اُولٰٓئِكَ هُمُ الْفٰسِقُوْنَ state that these people are the real disobedient of God. When they forgot God, they forgot the nature of their life's relationship with God, as a result of which they became utterly defiant to Him.

The essence of remembering God is evident from these words: a person should always keep fresh before himself the nature of his relationship with God. This continual remembrance has a great effect on one's life. If this relationship is not kept in mind, then remembering God bears little result; it becomes more of a ritual, observing which or not observing it is equal.

لَا يَسْتَوِيْٓ اَصْحٰبُ النَّارِ وَاَصْحٰبُ الْجَنَّةِ ۭ اَصْحٰبُ الْجَنَّةِ هُمُ الْفَاۗىِٕزُوْنَ ۝۲۰[21]

Mentioned in this verse is another very important reality, keeping which in mind, is essential to understanding the actual value and significance of life: the difference between the dwellers of Paradise and those of Hell will not be such that it should not be given importance to. Today, if a person, while succumbing to his base desires, is not able to feel the difference between Paradise and Hell, then he should keep in mind the fact that the difference between the two is not of some degree so that one can restrict oneself to lead the life of a dweller of Hell in some respect or the other; the difference between the two is that of eternal doom and eternal mercy. Success and salvation shall be reserved only for the dwellers of Paradise. The dwellers of Hell shall have nothing but torment and curse in store for them.

لَوْ اَنْزَلْنَا هٰذَا الْقُرْاٰنَ عَلٰي جَبَلٍ لَّرَاَيْتَهٗ خَاشِعًا مُّتَصَدِّعًا مِّنْ خَشْيَةِ اللّٰهِ ۭ وَتِلْكَ الْاَمْثَالُ نَضْرِبُهَا لِلنَّاسِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَفَكَّرُوْنَ ۝۲۱[22]

This verse scolds and rebukes the hypocrites: as far as educating and reminding them and conclusively delivering the truth to them is concerned, this have been done in their ultimate form. This Qur'ān is such an entity that had it been revealed on a

21. The companions of Hell and the companions of Paradise shall not be held equal. The companions of Paradise alone shall succeed.

22. Had We bought down this Qur'ān on a mountain, you would have seen it humble itself and break asunder for fear of God, and We mention such parables for people so that they may think.

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thing as hard and as insensitive as a mountain, it, too, would have submitted and shattered to pieces for fear of God; however, so hard-hearted are the hypocrites that they are not even slightly effected by it.

The Almighty says in the part وَ تِلْكَ الْاَمْثَالُ نَضْرِبُهَا لِلنَّاسِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَفَكَّرُوْنَ, that these parables are being mentioned so that people reflect on their circumstances to see that if such a potent thing is not influencing them, then the fault does not lie with it; it lies with their callous hearts. Moreover, they should also reflect that if this callousness has increased so much, then God, according to His practice, might even seal their hearts, in the same way that He sealed the hearts of the Jews.

This subject is discussed in various styles at various other instances in the Qur'ān. I will cite some examples so that the real picture emerges before the eyes of the readers. In Sūrah al-Baqarah, it was said regarding the Jews:

ثُمَّ قَسَتْ قُلُوْبُكُمْ مِّنْۢ بَعْدِ ذٰلِكَ فَهِيَ كَالْحِجَارَةِ اَوْ اَشَدُّ قَسْوَةً ؕ وَ اِنَّ مِنَ الْحِجَارَةِ لَمَا يَتَفَجَّرُ مِنْهُ الْاَنْهٰرُ ؕ وَ اِنَّ مِنْهَا لَمَا يَشَّقَّقُ فَيَخْرُجُ مِنْهُ الْمَآءُ ؕ وَ اِنَّ مِنْهَا لَمَا يَهْبِطُ مِنْ خَشْيَةِ اللّٰهِ ؕ وَ مَا اللّٰهُ بِغَافِلٍ عَمَّا تَعْمَلُوْنَ. (٧٤:٢)

Then, after this, your hearts became as hard as if they were rocks or even harder; and there are some rocks from which rivulets flow, and there are some which break asunder and water gushes from them, and others which fall down for fear of God. And God is not unaware of whatever you do. (2:74)

Similarly, in Sūrah al-Ḥadīd, it is said, regarding the hypocrites who are discussed here:

اَلَمْ يَاْنِ لِلَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْۤا اَنْ تَخْشَعَ قُلُوْبُهُمْ لِذِكْرِ اللّٰهِ وَ مَا نَزَلَ مِنَ الْحَقِّ ۙ وَ لَا يَكُوْنُوْا كَالَّذِيْنَ اُوْتُوا الْكِتٰبَ مِنْ قَبْلُ فَطَالَ عَلَيْهِمُ الْاَمَدُ فَقَسَتْ قُلُوْبُهُمْ ؕ وَ كَثِيْرٌ مِّنْهُمْ فٰسِقُوْنَ. (١٦:٥٧)

Is it not time for true believers to submit with fervent hearts to God's reminder, and to the truth revealed, and they may not be like those who were given the scriptures before this, then a long period passed and whose hearts were hardened? And many of them were defiant. (57:16)

It is evident from certain clues referred to by my mentor, Imām Ḥamīd al-Dīn Farāhī that he interprets this verse under discussion in the light of the following one: اِنَّا عَرَضْنَا الْاَمَانَةَ عَلَى السَّمٰوٰتِ وَ الْاَرْضِ وَ الْجِبَالِ فَاَبَيْنَ اَنْ يَّحْمِلْنَهَا وَ اَشْفَقْنَ مِنْهَا وَ حَمَلَهَا الْاِنْسَانُ ؕ اِنَّهٗ كَانَ ظَلُوْمًا جَهُوْلًا. (٧٢:٣٣) (We offered Our trust to the heavens, to the earth, and to the mountains, but they refused the burden and were afraid to receive it; man undertook to bear it. Indeed, he is one who wrongs his soul and is overwhelmed by emotions, (33:72)). No doubt, that one of its aspects is indeed explained by the above referred-to verse of Sūrah al-Aḥzāb; however, the verses of Sūrah al-Baqarah and Sūrah al-Aḥzāb quoted above

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explain each and every aspect of it.

The Qur'ān has regarded it as a parable. In a parable, there is no exaggeration or fantasy to be found; the objective is to see whether an abstract and symbolic thing has been depicted in a tangible and material way through comparison or not. Viewed thus, it will seem that this parable is a very fine and meaningful one.

The address in the word لَرَاَيْتَهٗ can be general; however, if the Prophet (sws) is regarded its addressee, then there is a lot of assurance in it for him as well: if people are not being influenced by his call, then this is no fault of his; such is the nature of the Qur'ān which is being recited out to him that had it been revealed on a mountain, it would have been rent asunder because of God's fear; however, their hearts have become harder than stones because they are not being influenced by it.

هُوَاللّٰهُ الَّذِیْ لَآ اِلٰهَ اِلَّا هُوَ ۚ عٰلِمُ الْغَیْبِ وَالشَّهَادَةِ ۚ هُوَ الرَّحْمٰنُ الرَّحِیْمُ ﴿۲۲﴾[23]

When the previous verse mentioned God's fear, this verse came up with a mention of the basic attributes of God so that the believers, the disbelievers and the hypocrites, all come to know of these attributes. They should thus have an idea of how to fear Him, how much to love Him, how to pin their hopes in Him, how to put their trust in Him and how to live and die for His cause. I have stated many times in this exegesis this fact of philosophy of religion that the basis of the *sharī'ah* and religion is the attributes of God and what these attributes entail. Whatever is mentioned in the Qur'ān from the beginning to the end, is a mention of manifestations of God's attributes and what they necessitate. From these attributes has emanated the philosophy of religion, and from them have the manifestations and forms of religious directives come into being. For this reason, it is essential to understand them; however, to understand them, it is essential to understand the whole Qur'ān. Here, I will just briefly allude to those aspects which are helpful in understanding the initial requirements of these attributes.

هُوَاللّٰهُ الَّذِیْ لَآ اِلٰهَ اِلَّا هُوَ: first of all, the Almighty has reminded us of His divinity and also of the fact that no one except Him is God. For this reason, a person should turn to him in both hope and despair. No one except Him is worthy of being called God or being worshipped. Similarly, no one should pin his hopes in some one other than God by regarding him to be the fountainhead of granting wishes and prayers.

عٰلِمُ الْغَیْبِ وَ الشَّهَادَةِ: He knows what is hidden and what is apparent. The word الْغَیْبِ (hidden) is used here with reference to people; otherwise, everything is apparent to God. Both hope and fear relate to this attribute. The aspect of despair is related to it the following manner: whatever a person does, whether openly or secretly, it is in God's knowledge, and when everything is in His knowledge, He shall necessarily call

23. He is God, besides whom there is no other deity. He knows the unseen and the seen. He is the Compassionate, the Merciful.

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man to account for each and every thing. At that time, neither will a person be able to hide any of his words or deeds, nor will any intercessor wrongly intercede for him before the Almighty. The aspect of hope is related to it in the following manner: when a person's Lord is aware of all the hidden and the apparent, then he should repose all his trust in Him, and present all his pleadings before Him.

هُوَ الرَّحْمٰنُ الرَّحِيْمُ: I have already elaborated upon the difference between الرَّحْمٰنُ and الرَّحِيْمُ in the exegesis of the bismallah verse. The former alludes to the fervour and zeal found in God's mercy, and the latter to its continuity and permanence. A little deliberation shows that in these attributes too, the aspects of both hope and fear are present. The aspect of hope is very evident: when God is both الرَّحْمٰنُ and الرَّحِيْمُ, then there is no question of any oppression and injustice with anyone so that anyone may require an intercessor to protect oneself from these. Whatever God has done and whatever He shall do, He has done and shall do for the sake of mercy – both in this world and in the Hereafter. The aspect of fear is that when God is both الرَّحْمٰنُ and الرَّحِيْمُ, He will not tolerate the oppression of anyone, and will necessarily avenge the oppression of all those who were guilty of it. For this reason, at various places in the Qur'ān, He has regarded the Day of Judgement to be a manifestation of His mercy: it is this mercy which necessitates such a day to come so that He does justice with each and every person: كَتَبَ عَلٰى نَفْسِهِ الرَّحْمَةَ ۭ لَيَجْمَعَنَّكُمْ اِلٰى يَوْمِ الْقِيٰمَةِ. (١٢:٦) (God has decreed mercy for Himself: surely, He will gather you all on the Day of Judgement, (6:12)).

هُوَ اللّٰهُ الَّذِيْ لَآ اِلٰهَ اِلَّا هُوَ ۚ اَلْمَلِكُ الْقُدُّوْسُ السَّلٰمُ الْمُؤْمِنُ الْمُهَيْمِنُ الْعَزِيْزُ الْجَبَّارُ الْمُتَكَبِّرُ ۭ سُبْحٰنَ اللّٰهِ عَمَّا يُشْرِكُوْنَ ﴿٢٣﴾[24]

The verse begins with the words already mentioned in the previous verse. Evident from this repetition is that the refutation of polytheism and the affirmation of monotheism is the most important thing pointed out here. The reason, obviously, is that polytheism emanates from wrong concepts regarding the attributes of God. And, when on these attributes all religion and *sharī'ah* are founded, as I have referred to earlier, then it is essential that any fissure in this foundation be taken care of.

After this, eight of God's worthy attributes are stated one after the other: there is no particle of conjugation between them. I have already explained this principle of the Arabic language at some place in this exegesis that when attributes are mentioned in this way, without any particle of conjugation, then it means that they are simultaneously present in the noun they qualify.

اَلْمَلِكُ (al-Mālik): He is the Sovereign Lord. He alone created the world and He alone is its master and ruler. It is because of this right of His that He sent His messengers so that they are able to inform people of His directives, and people, while obeying them,

24. He is God, besides whom there is no other deity. He is the Sovereign Lord, the Holy One, the Giver of Peace, the Giver of Refuge, the Guardian, the Mighty One, the All-Powerful, the Most High! Exalted be God above their idols!

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earn His pleasure.

الْقُدُّوْسُ (al-Quddūs) He is devoid of any blemish, any shortcoming and any wrong. For this reason, He has revealed His Book to purify and cleanse His servants. He sent His messengers so that people can become worthy of His nearness by being cleansed. In Sūrah al-Jumu'ah, both these attributes: اَلْمَلِكُ and الْقُدُّوْسُ are referred to, together with what they entail. First, God's attributes are mentioned thus: الْمَلِكِ الْقُدُّوْسِ الْعَزِيْزِ الْحَكِيْمِ. (١:٦٢). After what these attributes entail is stated in these words: هُوَالَّذِىْ بَعَثَ فِى الْاُمِّيّٖنَ رَسُوْلًا مِّنْهُمْ يَتْلُوْا عَلَيْهِمْ اٰيٰتِهٖ وَ يُزَكِّيْهِمْ وَ يُعَلِّمُهُمُ الْكِتٰبَ وَ الْحِكْمَةَ ۚ وَ اِنْ كَانُوْا مِنْ قَبْلُ لَفِىْ ضَلٰلٍ مُّبِيْنٍ. (٢:٦٢) (it is He Who has sent forth among the Unlettered, a Messenger of their own to recite to them His revelations and purifies them, (62:2)). A little deliberation shows that He sent His Messenger and revealed His Book because He is the sovereign Lord. An obvious requirement of He being the sovereign Lord is that He send His envoys to His subjects and also send His directives to them, and He wanted His subjects to be purified and cleansed because He Himself is pure and perfect. He does not like that His servants be incriminated with sin. Further down in the *sūrah*, the requirements of the attributes of 'Azīz and Ḥakīm have also been stated, which shall be explained when the time comes.

السَّلٰمُ (al-Salām): This world means "peace, happiness and serenity." If a person has to wish peace to someone, he uses this very word. About the night of destiny, the Qur'ān has stated: سَلٰمٌ ۛ هِىَ حَتّٰى مَطْلَعِ الْفَجْرِ. (٥:٩٧) (that night is peace in entirety; it is till break of dawn, (97:5)). In other words, God is a refuge and shield for His servants against every calamity and danger. When a person resigns himself to His refuge, he becomes happy and content. It is a blessing of this attribute that remembering God is a means of peace and tranquillity for the hearts: اَلَا بِذِكْرِ اللّٰهِ تَطْمَئِنُّ الْقُلُوْبُ. (٢٨:١٣) (surely, in the remembrance of God all hearts are comforted, (13:28)).

الْمُؤْمِنُ (al-Mu'min): this means "one who gives refuge." In other words, when a person seeks His refuge against Satan and his agents, He grants him His refuge. This refuge cannot be procured anywhere else and from anyone else. Satan has access to everyone except God.

الْمُهَيْمِنُ (al-Muhaymin): In the opinion of Khalīl and Abū 'Ubaydah, this word means "guardian." Ibn al-Anbārī is of the view that it means "protector" (*al-qā'im 'alā al-nās*). Imām Farāhī[25] says that it means "one who can be trusted and is one's advocate." In my opinion, there is not much difference between these meanings. He, who is the guardian and protector, is the one who can be trusted and who is one's advocate. The Qur'ān is also al-Muyahmin because it is a guardian over all other divine scriptures.

الْعَزِيْزُ (al-'Azīz): This attribute has been explained on several occasions in this

25. For all these opinions, see: Ḥamid al-Din Farāhi, *Mufradāt al-Qur'ān*, 2nd ed. (Azamgarh: Dā'irah al-Ḥamidiyyah, 2004), 383.

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exegesis. It has the meaning of being inaccessible and beyond, and also that of being powerful and strong. In other words, none can dominate or overpower God. He can vanquish all.

الْجَبَّارُ (al-Jabbār): This word refers to someone having might and power. This word is also used for stalks of tall palm trees. In the Qur'ān, it has also been used for the formidable people, fearing whom, the Israelites had pleaded thus to the Almighty: اِنَّ فِيْهَا قَوْمًا جَبَّارِيْنَ ۚ وَاِنَّا لَنْ نَّدْخُلَهَا حَتّٰى يَخْرُجُوْا مِنْهَا. (۵:۲۲) (a race of powerful people dwells in this land. And We do not have the courage to set foot in it till they are gone, (5:22). This attribute refutes all those concepts of divinity, in which all significance is given to goddesses.

الْمُتَكَبِّرُ (al-Mutakabbir): this word refers to someone who knows that he is great and superior. If this feeling is in someone other than the Almighty, then it is wrong, because none except God has attained greatness and superiority on His own. All others are great and superior because God has blessed them with greatness and superiority. The feeling of superiority is worthy for God and also a reality because His superiority is His own, and is so since the beginning and will remain with Him eternally. It is because of this feeling He has that He does not tolerate any partners in His kingdom and dominion. This cognizance of the Almighty is stated thus in other divine scriptures: "God your Lord is a *ghuyūr* [honourable] God; just as you would not tolerate that your wife sleep with someone else, he also does not tolerate that His servant serve someone else."[26] In my opinion, what the Qur'ān has denoted by the word الْمُتَكَبِّرُ (al-Mutakabbir), is denoted in these scriptures by the word *ghuyūr* [honourable].

سُبْحٰنَ اللّٰهِ عَمَّا يُشْرِكُوْنَ: The implication is that what is the comparison between these attributes of majesty and perfection of the Almighty, and between these imaginary deities of the idolaters? The God Who possesses these attributes is over and above associating such partners with. If such an association is made, His other basic attributes will stand in conflict with it, and if this is done forcibly, a disharmony will be created in His attributes.

هُوَ اللّٰهُ الْخَالِقُ الْبَارِئُ الْمُصَوِّرُ لَهُ الْاَسْمَآءُ الْحُسْنٰى ؕ يُسَبِّحُ لَهٗ مَا فِي السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ ۚ وَهُوَ الْعَزِيْزُ الْحَكِيْمُ ﴿۲۴﴾[27]

It is God Who causes all the phases of creation of everything to take place. He makes a plan of everything, and then creates it and models and perfects it. Neither does He ask for help to complete any of these phases, nor does anyone help Him out or is able to help Him in them; so, how can partners be imputed to Him in this

26. I have been unable to locate this verse in the divine scriptures. (*Translator*)

27. He is God, the Creator, the Originator, the Modeller. His are the most gracious attributes. All that is in the heavens and the earth gives glory to Him. And He is the Mighty, the Wise One.

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process? Each and every being passes through these three phases of creation. The first phase is that of design and plan. The Arabic word used for it is خلق. The second phase is to bring it into existence. The Arabic word used for it is برء. The third phase is to perfect it. The Arabic word used for it is تصویر. If it is God alone, Who is responsible for these three phases of a thing, He alone is worthy of being glorified and worshipped by all.

The implication of the words لَهُ الْاَسْمَآءُ الْحُسْنٰی is that mentioned in this verse are some basic attributes of the Almighty. All other gracious names and attributes also belong to Him. The word اَسْمَآءُ here refers to attributes. All names of God express one or the other attribute He possesses.

The implication of the words يُسَبِّحُ لَهٗ مَا فِی السَّمٰوٰتِ وَ الْاَرْضِ is that since it is God Who has caused all the phases of creation of a thing to take place, hence, everything in the heavens and the earth glorifies Him. If a person does not do so while exercising his freedom of will, then this is an act of not acknowledging the truth, and arrogance on his part. The correct attitude for him is to glorify and to worship God and not associate partners with Him.

The words وَهُوَ الْعَزِيْزُ الْحَكِيْمُ at the end once again remind man of God's attributes, with which this *sūrah* began. A person should keep in mind that God is powerful (عَزِيْزٌ) and hence He can do what He wants to. Had He intended, He would have forced man to worship and glorify Him the way the rest of the universe is doing. However, He, at the same time, is wise (حَكِيْمٌ). For this reason, He wanted to try man by giving him the freedom of will. He wanted to test whether, after being granted with this status, he recognises the right of God on him, or ends up as a slave of Satan.

With the grace of God, I come to the end of this *sūrah's* exegesis. فالحمد لله علی ذالك (so gratitude be to God on this).

Raḥmānābād
3rd February, 1978 AD
23rd Ṣafr 1398 AH

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Tadabbur i Qur’ān

Sūrah al-Mumtaḥinah (60)

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Sūrah al-Mumtaḥinah

Central Theme and Relationship with the Previous *Sūrah*

In the previous *sūrahs*, the hypocrites were asked to break their ties with the People of the Book, in particular the Jews, and most of these hypocrites, as was referred to earlier, were from among the People of the Book. In this *sūrah*, Muslims are asked to break their ties from the idolaters, and the address is specifically directed to those among them who had entered the folds of Islam and had also migrated to Madīnah for the cause of religion. However, they had not yet broken the shackles of kinship and brotherhood with the people of Makkah. For this reason, on occasions of trial, such weaknesses would emanate from them as were against faith and sincerity. In other words, the subject of uprooting hypocrisy and isolating the Muslims from the rest which is the common subject of all the *musabbiḥāt sūrahs*, is also the subject of this *sūrah*. The only difference is that in this *sūrah* the direction of address is towards Muslims who did migrate, yet the real Abrahamic essence of migration was not yet evident to them. They are reminded of the example set by Abraham (sws): if they want to reap the real blessings of migration, then, like Abraham (sws), they, too, must sever every kind of relationship with their former environment and dedicate themselves fully to God and His Prophet (sws).

Analysis of the Discourse

Verses (1-3): The *sūrah* begins with a warning sounded to the weak Muslims who, after migration, had secret ties of friendship with the idolaters of Makkah, even after they had expelled the Prophet (sws) and the Muslims from their land – their only fault being that they had professed faith in God. It is pointed out that these people are not worthy of such ties, as they would try all they can to make the Muslims reject faith; furthermore, if family ties at the expense of sincerity with God and the Prophet (sws) are established, then such relationships will never be of any use to them in the Hereafter: they shall stand severed in the next world.

Verses (4-7): A few glimpses of the episode of the Prophet Abraham (sws) are depicted and the addressees are directed to learn a lesson from it. He had proclaimed total acquittal from his nation unless they professed faith in the one and only God. In this regard, they are told to hold steadfast to Abraham's prayer which he had often said to persevere in the difficulties of his own migration. Moreover, glad tidings are

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given to them that it is quite possible that these people, from whom they have been directed to break their ties, would accept Islam in the near future.

Verses (8-9): An explanation of the fact that what has been asked is dissociation with those who had waged war with the Muslims and compelled them and the Prophet (sws) to leave their homes; those who have not done so, should be dealt with justice and in a virtuous way.

Verses (10-11): Certain directives relating to the women who had migrated from Makkah are given: they should only be accepted after they have been examined as regards their faith. If it is proven that they have migrated specifically for the cause of Islam, only then should they be included in the ranks of the Muslims. It is not lawful for the Muslims to keep idolatrous women in marriage. They should liberate them and mutually exchange the dowers.

Verse (12): The Prophet (sws) has been directed to take a pledge from women who come to him for the cause of Islam and intend to lead their lives purely according to its directives.

Verse (13): At the very end of the *sūrah*, Muslims are warned not to establish friendship with the Jews and the disbelievers. Both shall meet the same fate: they have been shaken from their very roots.

Text and Translation

Section I: Verses (1-7)

بِسۡمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحۡمٰنِ الرَّحِيۡمِ

يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيۡنَ اٰمَنُوۡا لَا تَتَّخِذُوۡا عَدُوِّىۡ وَعَدُوَّكُمۡ اَوۡلِيَآءَ تُلۡقُوۡنَ اِلَيۡهِمۡ بِالۡمَوَدَّةِ وَقَدۡ كَفَرُوۡا بِمَا جَآءَكُمۡ مِّنَ الۡحَقِّ ۚ
يُخۡرِجُوۡنَ الرَّسُوۡلَ وَاِيَّاكُمۡ اَنۡ تُؤۡمِنُوۡا بِاللّٰهِ رَبِّكُمۡ ؕ اِنۡ كُنۡتُمۡ خَرَجۡتُمۡ جِهَادًا فِىۡ سَبِيۡلِىۡ وَابۡتِغَآءَ مَرۡضَاتِىۡ ۚ تُسِرُّوۡنَ اِلَيۡهِمۡ
بِالۡمَوَدَّةِ ۚ وَاَنَا اَعۡلَمُ بِمَآ اَخۡفَيۡتُمۡ وَمَآ اَعۡلَنۡتُمۡ ؕ وَمَنۡ يَّفۡعَلۡهُ مِنۡكُمۡ فَقَدۡ ضَلَّ سَوَآءَ السَّبِيۡلِ ﴿۱﴾ اِنۡ يَّثۡقَفُوۡكُمۡ يَكُوۡنُوۡا
لَكُمۡ اَعۡدَآءً وَّيَبۡسُطُوۡٓا اِلَيۡكُمۡ اَيۡدِيَهُمۡ وَاَلۡسِنَتَهُمۡ بِالسُّوۡٓءِ وَوَدُّوۡا لَوۡ تَكۡفُرُوۡنَ ﴿۲﴾ لَنۡ تَنۡفَعَكُمۡ اَرۡحَامُكُمۡ وَلَاۤ اَوۡلَادُكُمۡ ۚ
يَوۡمَ الۡقِيٰمَةِ ۚ يَفۡصِلُ بَيۡنَكُمۡ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ بِمَا تَعۡمَلُوۡنَ بَصِيۡرٌ ﴿۳﴾ قَدۡ كَانَتۡ لَكُمۡ اُسۡوَةٌ حَسَنَةٌ فِىۡۤ اِبۡرٰهِيۡمَ وَالَّذِيۡنَ مَعَهٗ ۚ اِذۡ قَالُوۡا
لِقَوۡمِهِمۡ اِنَّا بُرَءٰٓؤُا مِنۡكُمۡ وَمِمَّا تَعۡبُدُوۡنَ مِنۡ دُوۡنِ اللّٰهِ ۫ كَفَرۡنَا بِكُمۡ وَبَدَا بَيۡنَنَا وَبَيۡنَكُمُ الۡعَدَاوَةُ وَالۡبَغۡضَآءُ اَبَدًا حَتّٰى
تُؤۡمِنُوۡا بِاللّٰهِ وَحۡدَهٗۤ اِلَّا قَوۡلَ اِبۡرٰهِيۡمَ لِاَبِيۡهِ لَاَسۡتَغۡفِرَنَّ لَكَ وَمَاۤ اَمۡلِكُ لَكَ مِنَ اللّٰهِ مِنۡ شَىۡءٍ ؕ رَبَّنَا عَلَيۡكَ تَوَكَّلۡنَا وَ
اِلَيۡكَ اَنَبۡنَا وَاِلَيۡكَ الۡمَصِيۡرُ ﴿۴﴾ رَبَّنَا لَا تَجۡعَلۡنَا فِتۡنَةً لِّلَّذِيۡنَ كَفَرُوۡا وَاغۡفِرۡ لَنَا رَبَّنَا ۚ اِنَّكَ اَنۡتَ الۡعَزِيۡزُ الۡحَكِيۡمُ ﴿۵﴾ لَقَدۡ
كَانَ لَكُمۡ فِيۡهِمۡ اُسۡوَةٌ حَسَنَةٌ لِّمَنۡ كَانَ يَرۡجُوا اللّٰهَ وَالۡيَوۡمَ الۡاٰخِرَ ؕ وَمَنۡ يَّتَوَلَّ فَاِنَّ اللّٰهَ هُوَ الۡغَنِىُّ الۡحَمِيۡدُ ﴿۶﴾ عَسَى اللّٰهُ

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اَنۡ يَّجۡعَلَ بَيۡنَكُمۡ وَبَيۡنَ الَّذِيۡنَ عَادَيۡتُمۡ مِّنۡهُمۡ مَّوَدَّةً ؕ وَاللّٰهُ قَدِيۡرٌ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ غَفُوۡرٌ رَّحِيۡمٌ ۝

In the name of God, the Most-Gracious, the Ever-Merciful.

Believers! Do not befriend those who are My enemies and yours; you extend ties of love and friendship to them, whereas they have denied the truth that has been revealed to you; they drive out the Messenger and yourselves because you professed faith in God, your Lord – if you set off to fight for My cause, concealing your ties of friendship with them, even though I know what you conceal and what you reveal. And whoever of you do this have strayed from the right path. (1)

If they are able to find you, they will become your enemies and will raise their hands and voice against you and will desire that you too become disbelievers. (2)

On the Day of Judgement, neither your kinsfolk, nor your progeny shall avail you. On that day, God will separate you. He is fully watching over all your actions. (3)

You have the best example in Abraham and his companions when they said to their people: "We disown you and those which you worship besides God. We renounce you. Enmity and hate has become eternally evident between us until you believe in the one and only God." Except for the words of Abraham to his father: "I shall implore forgiveness for you, although I have no authority from God for you in any way." – " Our Lord! In You we have put our trust; to You we turn and to You we shall come at last. Lord! Do not make us the targets of evil-doing of these disbelievers. And our Lord! Forgive us, Lord. Indeed, You are the Mighty, the Wise One." (4-5)

Indeed, there is a good example in them for you. For those who expect [to meet] God and [see] the Last Day. And those, who evade should know that God is self-sufficient and has all worthy attributes. (6)

It may well be that God will instil friendship between you and your enemies. God is Powerful and is Forgiving and Merciful. (7)

Explanation

يٰۤاَيُّهَا الَّذِيۡنَ اٰمَنُوۡا لَا تَتَّخِذُوۡا عَدُوِّىۡ وَعَدُوَّكُمۡ اَوۡلِيَآءَ تُلۡقُوۡنَ اِلَيۡهِمۡ بِالۡمَوَدَّةِ وَقَدۡ كَفَرُوۡا بِمَا جَآءَكُمۡ مِّنَ الۡحَقِّ ۚ يُخۡرِجُوۡنَ الرَّسُوۡلَ وَاِيَّاكُمۡ اَنۡ تُؤۡمِنُوۡا بِاللّٰهِ رَبِّكُمۡ ؕ اِنۡ كُنۡتُمۡ خَرَجۡتُمۡ جِهَادًا فِىۡ سَبِيۡلِىۡ وَابۡتِغَآءَ مَرۡضَاتِىۡ ۚ تُسِرُّوۡنَ اِلَيۡهِمۡ بِالۡمَوَدَّةِ ۚ وَاَنَا اَعۡلَمُ بِمَاۤ اَخۡفَيۡتُمۡ وَمَاۤ اَعۡلَنۡتُمۡ ؕ وَمَنۡ يَّفۡعَلۡهُ مِنۡكُمۡ فَقَدۡ ضَلَّ سَوَآءَ السَّبِيۡلِ ۝[1]

Though the verse addresses Muslims in a general way, it is directed at those among them, who, even after passing through the phase of migration, still held relations with

1. Believers! Do not befriend those who are enemies of Mine and yours; you extend ties of love and friendship to them, whereas they have denied the truth that has been revealed to you; they drive out the Messenger and yourselves because you professed faith in God, your Lord – if you set off to fight for My cause, concealing your ties of friendship with them, even though I know what you conceal and what you reveal. And whoever of you do this have strayed from the right path.

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their families among the idolaters of Quraysh. As long as the Muslims were not directed to wage a general war against the idolaters, this weakness among such Muslims remained concealed; however, once the Muslims were asked to go after the idolaters, this weakness started to become evident. These people were not only hesitant in lifting arms against their families and tribes; they also wanted to make the leaders of the Quraysh happy, lest these leaders get after their families. This attitude of these Muslims was more akin to conciliation with the circumstances, than to hypocrisy; they thought that if they continued having good relations with their relatives, this might influence them into accepting Islam. However, the Qur'ān regarded this compromise as being against the dictates of faith. It told them that the faith they claim requires that they cannot keep relations with people who are the enemies of God and of their own.

The word عَدُوٌّ is used for both singular and plural entities. It is of the pattern of فَعُوْلٌ and in Arabic, this pattern is used for both singular and plural entities – in fact, it does not even distinguish between the masculine and feminine gender.

The words تُلْقُوْنَ اِلَيْهِمْ بِالْمَوَدَّةِ وَقَدْ كَفَرُوْا بِمَا جَآءَكُمْ مِّنَ الْحَقِّ يُخْرِجُوْنَ الرَّسُوْلَ وَ اِيَّاكُمْ اَنْ تُؤْمِنُوْا بِاللّٰهِ رَبِّكُمْ are an explanation of what is mentioned above: such Muslims have friendly ties with these idolaters while the latter are enemies of both God and the Muslims. It is evident from their animosity that they rejected the religion of the Muslims and their Prophet (sws), and they wanted to drive out these Muslims from their homes simply because they professed faith in God.

The style in تُلْقُوْنَ اِلَيْهِمْ بِالْمَوَدَّةِ is similar to the style in the verse: وَلَا تُلْقُوْا بِاَيْدِيْكُمْ اِلَى التَّهْلُكَةِ (۲:۱۹۵) (and do not, with your own hands, cast yourselves into destruction, (2:195)). Such relations are generally established through epistles and letters and various other means. Hence this style is very appropriate to convey this meaning. In due consideration of this style, I have translated the expression as "extending ties of love and friendship."

The present tense employed in يُخْرِجُوْنَ الرَّسُوْلَ وَ اِيَّاكُمْ is meant to portray the whole scenario before the eyes. It is meant to stir the honour of those, who are desirous of having relations with such callous people who had driven out the Prophet (sws) and his Companions (rta) from their homes. They are told that if, in spite of this, they continue to invite and sustain friendly ties with these idolaters, then they should assess their own faith because all their anger is on professing faith in God, the Lord of the Muslims. The word رَبِّكُمْ (your Lord) is argumentative in nature: when God is the Lord, then He, alone, is worthy of being professed faith in. If Muslims professed faith in Him, then they only did what was their duty towards a rightful being; however, this attitude of recognizing the truth became a source of anger for these idolaters.

I have explained the style اَنْ تُؤْمِنُوْا at a number of places. At times, an ellipsis of a governing noun (*muḍāf*) occurs before اَنْ. If this is unfolded, the discourse would be something to the effect: "they are driving you out on the sin or the charge of

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professing belief in God, your Lord." In other words, their greatest virtue and greatest act of acknowledgement of truth has become their greatest sin in the eyes of their enemies.

Consider now the next part of the verse: اِنۡ كُنۡتُمۡ خَرَجۡتُمۡ جِهَادًا فِىۡ سَبِيۡلِىۡ وَابۡتِغَآءَ مَرۡضَاتِىۡ ۚ تُسِرُّوۡنَ اِلَيۡهِمۡ بِالۡمَوَدَّةِ ۚ وَاَنَا اَعۡلَمُ بِمَاۤ اَخۡفَيۡتُمۡ وَمَاۤ اَعۡلَنۡتُمۡ ؕ وَمَنۡ يَّفۡعَلۡهُ مِنۡكُمۡ فَقَدۡ ضَلَّ سَوَآءَ السَّبِيۡلِ. Our exegetes have not been able to fully grasp the correct grammatical construction of this part. So I will firstly try to point it out. They generally think that there is an ellipses of the answer to the condition found in it, and have tried to determine it from intrinsic indications in the text; however, in my opinion, the answer to both conditions: اِنۡ كُنۡتُمۡ and وَمَنۡ يَّفۡعَلۡهُ is the same, viz: فَقَدۡ ضَلَّ سَوَآءَ السَّبِيۡلِ. The word تُسِرُّوۡنَ is an accusative of state from the pronoun of address, while the part وَاَنَا اَعۡلَمُ بِمَاۤ اَخۡفَيۡتُمۡ وَمَاۤ اَعۡلَنۡتُمۡ is in the form of a parenthetical sentence.

The whole discourse can be unfolded thus: "If you go out for my cause for *jihād* and to please Me, such that you hide the desire of befriending the enemies of God and His Prophet, even though I have full knowledge of your inner and outer-selves, then you should remember that those of you who do this will have gone astray."

The obvious reason for regarding such people going astray is that fighting for the cause of God and trying to earn His pleasure are totally at odds with making friends with the enemies of God and His Prophet (sws). Both these attitudes cannot co-exist in the heart. Had the Almighty no knowledge of both a person's inner and outer-selves, it was possible to deceive Him; however, since He is aware of both these facets how can He be deceived? People who are going out while housing these opposing desires in their hearts should remember that they are, in fact, going out for the cause of Satan and not that of God.

این رہ کہ تو میروی بہ ترکستان است

(This path which you are treading will take you to Turkey [and not to your destination])

Our exegetes have cited an occasion of revelation for this verse: it relates to a certain incident involving Ḥātib ibn Abī Balta'ah (rta). I have already quoted the opinion of my mentor Ḥamīd al-Dīn al-Farāhī in the introduction to this exegesis that when our early authorities cite an incident as an occasion of revelation of a particular verse, it does not necessarily mean that that particular incident caused the revelation of a certain verse; its purpose is to inform us that the verse also contains guidance for such incidents. A little deliberation will show that it does not refer to a particular incident; it only alludes to a certain situation. The weakness of human character it points out is not unique; it is the result of a common human weakness or, as I have pointed out earlier, based on a favourable expediency. It will become evident from succeeding verses that this latter aspect is more appropriate to be understood. However, it is only the Almighty, the all-

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knower and the wise, Who is aware of all expediencies. At times, a person forms an opinion out of sincerity; however, concealed in it is a human weakness, which he himself is not able to realize. It is on such weaknesses that the Almighty has informed us that all the actions of the vanguard of this *ummah* form an example, to be followed by the later people.

اِنْ يَّثْقَفُوْكُمْ يَكُوْنُوْا لَكُمْ اَعْدَآءً وَّيَبْسُطُوْٓا اِلَيْكُمْ اَيْدِيَهُمْ وَاَلْسِنَتَهُمْ بِالسُّوْٓءِ وَوَدُّوْا لَوْ تَكْفُرُوْنَ ۝[2]

Muslims are being informed that while they are desirous of friendship with such people, the latter's hearts are replete with animosity and hatred for the Muslims. If such people are able to get the better of Muslims at some place, they will not hesitate from harming them by the hand, or even by the tongue; they will fully try to convert the Muslims back to their former beliefs. In Sūrah al-Tawbah, the words used for this attitude are: وَ اِنْ يَّظْهَرُوْا عَلَيْكُمْ لَا يَرْقُبُوْا فِيْكُمْ اِلًّا وَّ لَا ذِمَّةً. (۸:۹) (if they prevail against you, they will respect neither promises, nor ties of kindred, (9:8)). The implication is that their animosity with the Muslims is en bloc and they are so stern in this that they have no regard for any relationship or promise in this matter. So, Muslims should not expect any virtue from them; in fact, the correct attitude in these circumstances for the Muslims too, is to relinquish every desire of befriending them.

لَنْ تَنْفَعَكُمْ اَرْحَامُكُمْ وَلَآ اَوْلَادُكُمْ ۚ يَوْمَ الْقِيٰمَةِ ۚ يَفْصِلُ بَيْنَكُمْ ۭ وَاللّٰهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُوْنَ بَصِيْرٌ ۝[3]

The word اَرْحَام connotes "relationships and kinships." People who give preference to these ties over the requisites of religion should remember that on the Day of Judgement they will be of no benefit to them. On that Day, the Almighty will create a great gulf between all such relations. At one instance, this alienation is portrayed thus:

وَلَا يَسْئَلُ حَمِيْمٌ حَمِيْمًا. يُّبَصَّرُوْنَهُمْ ۭ يَوَدُّ الْمُجْرِمُ لَوْ يَفْتَدِيْ مِنْ عَذَابِ يَوْمِىِٕذٍ بِبَنِيْهِ. وَصَاحِبَتِهٖ وَاَخِيْهِ. وَفَصِيْلَتِهِ الَّتِيْ تُـْٔوِيْهِ. وَمَنْ فِي الْاَرْضِ جَمِيْعًا ۙ ثُمَّ يُنْجِيْهِ. (۷۰:۱۰-۱٤)

And no friend shall inquire after his friend, [though] they shall be shown to one another. The sinner will long to redeem himself from the torment of that Day by offering his sons, his wife, his brother, his family, who remained his shelter and all the people of the earth as ransom and then save himself from it. (70:10-14)

In Sūrah 'Abas, this aspect is discussed thus:

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2. If they are able to find you, they will become your enemies and will raise their hands and voice against you and will desire that you, too, become disbelievers.

3. On the Day of Judgement, neither your kinsfolk, nor your progeny shall avail you. On that day, God will separate you. He is fully watching over all your actions.

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يَوْمَ يَفِرُّ الْمَرْءُ مِنْ اَخِيْهِ. وَاُمِّهٖ وَاَبِيْهِ. وَصَاحِبَتِهٖ وَبَنِيْهِ. (٨٠: ٣٤-٣٦)

On that Day, man will flee from his brother, mother and father, his wife and his sons. (80:34-36)

While addressing such Muslims, they are sounded this warning thus in Sūrah al-Tawbah:

يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا لَا تَتَّخِذُوْٓا اٰبَآءَكُمْ وَ اِخْوَانَكُمْ اَوْلِيَآءَ اِنِ اسْتَحَبُّوا الْكُفْرَ عَلَى الْاِيْمَانِ ؕ وَ مَنْ يَّتَوَلَّهُمْ مِّنْكُمْ فَاُولٰٓئِكَ هُمُ الظّٰلِمُوْنَ. قُلْ اِنْ كَانَ اٰبَآؤُكُمْ وَ اَبْنَآؤُكُمْ وَ اِخْوَانُكُمْ وَ اَزْوَاجُكُمْ وَ عَشِيْرَتُكُمْ وَ اَمْوَالُ ۨ اقْتَرَفْتُمُوْهَا وَ تِجَارَةٌ تَخْشَوْنَ كَسَادَهَا وَ مَسٰكِنُ تَرْضَوْنَهَآ اَحَبَّ اِلَيْكُمْ مِّنَ اللّٰهِ وَ رَسُوْلِهٖ وَ جِهَادٍ فِيْ سَبِيْلِهٖ فَتَرَبَّصُوْا حَتّٰى يَاْتِيَ اللّٰهُ بِاَمْرِهٖ ؕ وَ اللّٰهُ لَا يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الْفٰسِقِيْنَ. (٩: ٢٣-٢٤)

Believers! Do not befriend your fathers or your brothers if they choose disbelief in preference to faith. And those, who befriend them, are the ones who wrong their souls. [O Prophet!] tell them: "If your fathers, your sons, your brothers, your wives, your tribes, the wealth you have acquired, the merchandise you fear may not be sold, and the homes you like, are dearer to you than God, His Prophet and the struggle for His cause, then wait until God makes His Judgement, and [keep this in mind that] God does not guide such people who break their promises." (9:23-24)

In the verse under discussion, the expression يَوْمَ الْقِيٰمَةِ is so beautifully juxtaposed that it has become an adverb of place for the verbs preceding and succeeding it.

The words وَ اللّٰهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُوْنَ بَصِيْرٌ are another admonition: people should not remain under the misconception that whatever they are trying to conceal will be concealed from the eyes of God too. Nothing is hidden from Him; each and every deed they do is in His knowledge.

قَدْ كَانَتْ لَكُمْ اُسْوَةٌ حَسَنَةٌ فِيْٓ اِبْرٰهِيْمَ وَ الَّذِيْنَ مَعَهٗ ۚ اِذْ قَالُوْا لِقَوْمِهِمْ اِنَّا بُرَءٰٓؤُا مِنْكُمْ وَ مِمَّا تَعْبُدُوْنَ مِنْ دُوْنِ اللّٰهِ ۫ كَفَرْنَا بِكُمْ وَ بَدَا بَيْنَنَا وَ بَيْنَكُمُ الْعَدَاوَةُ وَ الْبَغْضَآءُ اَبَدًا حَتّٰى تُؤْمِنُوْا بِاللّٰهِ وَحْدَهٗٓ اِلَّا قَوْلَ اِبْرٰهِيْمَ لِاَبِيْهِ لَاَسْتَغْفِرَنَّ لَكَ وَ مَآ اَمْلِكُ لَكَ مِنَ اللّٰهِ مِنْ شَيْءٍ ؕ رَبَّنَا عَلَيْكَ تَوَكَّلْنَا وَ اِلَيْكَ اَنَبْنَا وَ اِلَيْكَ الْمَصِيْرُ ۝[4]

4. You have the best example in Abraham and his companions when they said to their people: "We disown you and those which you worship besides God. We renounce you. Enmity and hate has become eternally evident between us until you believe in the one and only God." Except for the words of Abraham to his father: "I shall implore forgiveness for you, although I

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These Muslims are told that in order to receive guidance in this matter they do not have to go far off; their own ancestor Abraham (sws) and his companions have already set an example worthy of following for them. The words قَدْ كَانَتْ show that this example is not something unknown; it is, on the contrary, a well-known fact that they are already aware of. It needs to be understood that the Arabs were proud to be the progeny of Abraham (sws) and Ishmael (sws). They were aware of the traditions of his migration and sacrifice offered. Though, with the passage of time, a lot of dust had settled on these traditions and innovations too had distorted them, it was not that they were completely unaware of them as some historians think.

It is evident from the words وَ الَّذِيْنَ مَعَهٗ that Abraham (sws) did not migrate alone; some people of his clan, too, professed faith in him and migrated along with him.

The words اِذْ قَالُوْا لِقَوْمِهِمْ اِنَّا بُرَءٰٓؤُا مِنْكُمْ وَ مِمَّا تَعْبُدُوْنَ مِنْ دُوْنِ اللّٰهِ كَفَرْنَا بِكُمْ refer to the declaration of acquittal which Abraham (sws) and his companions made before his people. They openly announced their renunciation from their people, as well as from the deities they worshipped and rejected their religion; they further declared that after this proclamation of renunciation, enmity and hatred has become clear between them and their people until the latter profess faith.

The words وَ بَدَا بَيْنَنَا وَ بَيْنَكُمُ الْعَدَاوَةُ وَ الْبَغْضَآءُ اَبَدًا حَتّٰى تُؤْمِنُوْا بِاللّٰهِ وَحْدَهٗٓ are a continuation of this declaration of renunciation: the implication is that until now, Abraham (sws) and his companions have shown lenience to their people so that they are able to communicate to them the message of religion; however, since this has now been done in such a conclusive manner that their people are not left with any excuse and they are still adamant on their ill-ways, this declaration is now being sounded to them; from now on, there shall be open enmity between Abraham (sws) and his companions and between their clan until they repent from polytheism and accept the call of monotheism.

Our exegetes generally think that the words اِلَّا قَوْلَ اِبْرٰهِيْمَ لِاَبِيْهِ لَاَسْتَغْفِرَنَّ لَكَ are an exception from the worthy example set by Abraham (sws) and his companions. However, in my opinion, they are an exception to the declaration of renunciation. In other words, after this vehement and open declaration, if any leniency was shown by Abraham (sws), it was his promise to his father to pray for his forgiveness before God, even though, he has no authority on behalf of God over his father's matter. The implication being that though God's will always prevail, he will still pray for his father before Him.

The reason for offering this leniency was Abraham's temperament, evident from other places of the Qur'ān: he was very compassionate and forbearing. He thought that if he prayed for his father, then this would not be adverse to the declaration of renunciation he had made against all his people and, in fact, was a natural corollary of the benevolence every son is bound to show to his parents. Till that time, he also did

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have no authority from God for you in any way." – " Our Lord! In You we have put our trust; to You we turn, and to You we shall come at last.

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not know the extent of his father's enmity with religion; he thought that the real reason for the father's anger was that he, as per his own beliefs, wanted to save his son from being misguided; however, when it became evident that his father was a die-hard enemy of religion, Abraham (sws) declared his complete acqujittal from him.

Through the words وَمَآ اَمۡلِكُ لَكَ مِنَ اللّٰهِ مِنۡ شَیۡءٍ Abraham (sws) has also explained the true spirit of monotheism, alongside his promise of seeking repentance for his father: the only authority he has, is to pray to God to forgive his father; whether he is forgiven or not rests totally with God. Abraham (sws) has no say in this matter. It must be understood here that the prayer of forgiveness for someone is just a recommendation. When a prophet as grand as Abraham (sws) expresses such lack of authority, what can one say of others?

The words رَبَّنَا عَلَیۡكَ تَوَكَّلۡنَا وَاِلَیۡكَ اَنَبۡنَا وَاِلَیۡكَ الۡمَصِیۡرُ relate to the declaration of renunciation. The part اِلَّا قَوۡلَ اِبۡرٰهِیۡمَ which occurs in between, is a parenthetical sentence. At its end, the next words are a part of this declaration and constitute a supplication made by Abraham (sws) and his companions at this precarious moment. At other instances, I have clarified that after such a declaration of renunciation, a prophet and his companions necessarily migrate from their people. This phase is indeed very exacting. It is not easy to dissociate one self from a whole nation by declaring one's disgust and eternal enmity for them. For this reason, every messenger resigns himself and his companions to God at the time of migration. A similar prayer was uttered at this time by Moses (sws) and by Muhammad (sws) also. This prayer expresses the fact that the virtuous intentions of a person are materialized only after God provides facility and favourable circumstances. For this reason, every step should be taken by seeking His help. Only those succeed in the trials of God, whose hearts are always inclined towards Him, and who have the full conviction that at last, one day, they will have to return to their Lord.

رَبَّنَا لَا تَجۡعَلۡنَا فِتۡنَةً لِّلَّذِیۡنَ كَفَرُوۡا وَاغۡفِرۡ لَنَا رَبَّنَا ۚ اِنَّكَ اَنۡتَ الۡعَزِیۡزُ الۡحَكِیۡمُ ﴿۵﴾[5]

These words are also part of the supplication mentioned above. Here, the word فِتۡنَةً means "targets of trial" and refers to the hardships inflicted by the disbelievers on the Muslims. The implication of this supplication of the Muslims is: Lord! We have declared this acquittal and enmity against these idolaters out of our sense of honour for Your *tawhīd*; we are fully ready to face whatever now emanates from them; do not give them so much respite that they make us the targets of their oppression and cruelty.

The words وَاغۡفِرۡ لَنَا رَبَّنَا imply: Lord! Forgive our weaknesses and our sins. Our sins should not become the cause to make us so weak, as to provide an opportunity to our enemies to oppress us.

5. Lord! Do not make us the targets of evil-doing of these disbelievers. And our Lord! Forgive us, Lord. Indeed, You are the Mighty, the Wise One.

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Hidden in the above sentence of supplication is the acknowledgement that if any trial is faced by the Muslims, it will be as a result of their own misdeeds; since God has authority over everything, they beg Him to forgive them and to protect them from such trials.

The words اِنَّكَ اَنْتَ الْعَزِيْزُ الْحَكِيْمُ signify one's total resignation to God. He is powerful and can do anything He wants to; no one can stop Him; at the same time, He is wise as well. All His works are based on wisdom, and hence Muslims submit all their affairs to Him; whatever He does encompasses good and is based on wisdom and expediency.

لَقَدْ كَانَ لَكُمْ فِيْهِمْ اُسْوَةٌ حَسَنَةٌ لِّمَنْ كَانَ يَرْجُوا اللّٰهَ وَالْيَوْمَ الْاٰخِرَ ؕ وَمَنْ يَّتَوَلَّ فَاِنَّ اللّٰهَ هُوَ الْغَنِيُّ الْحَمِيْدُ ۝6

These words are a permutative (*badl*) from the words قَدْ كَانَ لَكُمْ فِيْهِمْ اُسْوَةٌ حَسَنَةٌ of verse four. What is implied is that indeed, for them the best example to follow in this matter is found in the declaration of renunciation made by Abraham (sws) and his companions; however, not every slave to his desires is able to follow such an example. Only those people have the courage to embark upon this job, who also hope to receive God's help and for the Hereafter to materialize. People, who do not have full conviction in these two things cannot undertake this task. In other words, giving up one's house, wealth, assets, country and nation is only possible for those, who, at every step of this journey, are hopeful of receiving God's help and whose real reliance is not on their wealth and assets, but on the blessings and rewards of the Hereafter. This verse fully explains the real provision a person must have for such a migration, and also explains the real cause of the weaknesses which were showed by certain people in this phase.

The words وَمَنْ يَّتَوَلَّ فَاِنَّ اللّٰهَ هُوَ الْغَنِيُّ الْحَمِيْدُ sound a warning to these people. The real path of success is that they should follow the example set by Abraham (sws) and his companions; otherwise they should remember that God cares least about those who evade this path. He is not dependent on or in need of anyone. He is totally self-sufficient and has all worthy attributes. His kingdom is not running through the help of others; it is run by Him alone.

عَسَى اللّٰهُ اَنْ يَّجْعَلَ بَيْنَكُمْ وَبَيْنَ الَّذِيْنَ عَادَيْتُمْ مِّنْهُمْ مَّوَدَّةً ؕ وَاللّٰهُ قَدِيْرٌ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ غَفُوْرٌ رَّحِيْمٌ ۝7

Expressed in this verse are great glad tidings for Muslims: if today, they show courage to declare their enmity with these relatives, they should know that this enmity

6. Indeed, there is a good example in them for you. For those who expect [to meet] God and [see] the Last Day. And those who evade should know that God is self-sufficient and has all worthy attributes.

7. It may well be that God will instil friendship between you and your enemies. God is forgiving and merciful.

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will not remain forever; there is a possibility that the Almighty change it into friendship, and their enemies of today ultimately embrace Islam and become warm friends.

The section وَاللّٰهُ قَدِيْرٌ ۭ وَاللّٰهُ غَفُوْرٌ رَّحِيْمٌ refers to the fact that the Almighty has power over all things; if He wants, He can turn foes, who are after the lives of people, into their warm friends. He is forgiving and merciful: He does not find excuses to inflict people with torment; He, in fact, tries to find excuses to forgive them. One should not think that the most die-hard of His enemies will always remain His enemies; it might well be that with the mercy of God, they, too, are able to see the light of faith.

The attributes غَفُوْرٌ رَّحِيْمٌ also contain an element of glad tidings in them: if, after this admonition, people who have clandestine ties with the enemies of God, realize their folly and reform their state of affairs, then God is forgiving and merciful; He will forgo their faults.

The glad tidings of the acceptance of faith by the people of Makkah found in this verse, has a specific psychological reason which needs to be kept in consideration: when these people saw that when many of their brothers and sisters and close relatives were leaving them and also forsaking their wealth and assets and their families merely for the cause of religion, they concluded that countering the call of this faith with oppression and tyranny is not the right way and that they should assess their own attitude in this regard.

I have perhaps mentioned in this exegesis, or in some other book of mine that the thing which initially inclined the hearts of 'Umar (rta) to Islam was the migration of some oppressed men and women to Abyssinia. This migration had affected every sensitive man and woman. Thus, it was, as a result of this migration that the rate of conversion to Islam greatly increased. It was essential to keep the rate of this conversion on its natural pace, so that no one among the emigrants expresses his or her weakness before the people of Makkah. If anyone of them had expressed this weakness before them, then the people of Makkah would have thought that though Muslims have migrated from them, yet they are regretting their step and want to initiate friendly ties with them. This would have weakened the impulse in them to come closer to Islam and, would have also weakened the morale of the Muslims stranded in Makkah. For this reason, the Qur'ān sternly chided Muslims on this weakness, and warned them to not advance friendly ties with the enemies of Islam. If they make friends with those soiled with the filth of disbelief, they, themselves will be doomed. However, if they persist in showing animosity with their relatives of Makkah, it might well be that the Almighty shows them the light of faith and makes them their friends. Consequently, these glad tidings materialized and people saw multitudes entering the folds of Islam, as is depicted in the Qur'ānic verse: وَ رَاَيْتَ النَّاسَ يَدْخُلُوْنَ فِيْ دِيْنِ اللّٰهِ اَفْوَاجًا. (۲:۱۱۰) (and you see men embrace the religion of God in multitudes, (110:2).

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Section II: Verses (8-9)

In the succeeding verses, it is clarified that what is being prohibited is friendship with those who have driven out Muslims from their homes or helped others in turning them out. Those who have not committed such excesses are not the addressees of this directive. They must be treated justly and in a befitting manner.

Some people are of the opinion that these verses were revealed later, when, after complying with this directive, Muslims adopted an unbalanced attitude with the disbelievers. In my opinion, such a supposition is not required. It is evident that the above-mentioned verses address Muslims who were desirous of persisting with their ties with the people of Makkah. They could have simultaneously been told both these things: advancing ties of friendship with die-hard enemies of God is against the spirit of faith which they lay claim to; however, those of them who are not hostile, must be dealt by them with justice and fairness and this would be befitting for them.

لَا يَنْهٰىكُمُ اللّٰهُ عَنِ الَّذِيْنَ لَمْ يُقَاتِلُوْكُمْ فِي الدِّيْنِ وَلَمْ يُخْرِجُوْكُمْ مِّنْ دِيَارِكُمْ اَنْ تَبَرُّوْهُمْ وَتُقْسِطُوْٓا اِلَيْهِمْ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ يُحِبُّ الْمُقْسِطِيْنَ ۝٨ اِنَّمَا يَنْهٰىكُمُ اللّٰهُ عَنِ الَّذِيْنَ قٰتَلُوْكُمْ فِي الدِّيْنِ وَ اَخْرَجُوْكُمْ مِّنْ دِيَارِكُمْ وَ ظٰهَرُوْا عَلٰٓى اِخْرَاجِكُمْ اَنْ تَوَلَّوْهُمْ ۚ وَمَنْ يَّتَوَلَّهُمْ فَاُولٰٓئِكَ هُمُ الظّٰلِمُوْنَ ۝٩

God does not forbid you to be kind and just to those who have neither waged war against you in the matter of religion, nor driven you from your homes. God loves the just. (8)

God only forbids you to make friends with those who have fought against you on account of your religion, and driven you from your homes or helped in driving you out. And those who make friends with such people will only wrong their own souls. (9)

Explanation

لَا يَنْهٰىكُمُ اللّٰهُ عَنِ الَّذِيْنَ لَمْ يُقَاتِلُوْكُمْ فِي الدِّيْنِ وَلَمْ يُخْرِجُوْكُمْ مِّنْ دِيَارِكُمْ اَنْ تَبَرُّوْهُمْ وَتُقْسِطُوْٓا اِلَيْهِمْ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ يُحِبُّ الْمُقْسِطِيْنَ ۝٨[8]

Research on the word بِرٌّ has already presented in Sūrah al-Baqarah.[9] It means "keeping regard of blood relations, fulfilling obligations and doing a favour." The word اقْسَاط means "justice and fairness" ie. giving the rightful his due right and not take away anything from it.

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8. God does not forbid you to be kind and just to those who have neither waged war against you in the matter of religion, nor driven you from your homes. Indeed, God loves the just.

9. Amīn Aḥsan Iṣlāḥī, *Tadabbur-i Qur'ān*, vol. 1, 143-144.

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The verse لَا تَتَّخِذُوْا عَدُوِّیْ وَ عَدُوَّكُمْ اَوْلِیَآءَ (do not befriend My enemies and yours) says that the directive given to the Muslims did not mean that they do not be fair and just to those who did not fight them regarding religion or drove them out of their homes. What is being forbidden is friendship and not justice, as the succeeding verse will clarify. Also, this prohibition does not relate to all the disbelievers; it relates only to those among them, who fought with the Muslims because of religion and drove them out of their homes.

The war mentioned in the verse is qualified by the word "religion." The implication is that the battle and war implied here are not the ones which result because of a clash between national or family interest; it only refers to wars which the disbelievers engaged in, only to show their opposition to religion and to stop people from worshipping the one and only God. Religion is the common asset of every person of faith, and on it depends his salvation and success. Therefore, a person who befriends those who are enemies of religion is someone who is untruthful in his claim to faith.

The words اِنَّ اللّٰهَ یُحِبُّ الْمُقْسِطِیْنَ (indeed God loves the just) encourage the just. Here a question arises: when, in the afore-mentioned verse, both بِرٌّ (keeping regard of blood relations) and قِسْط (justice) are mentioned, it was appropriate that the doers of both these virtues be encouraged; why were only those who dispensed justice, were regarded to be dear to God? In my opinion, the answer to this question is that virtues which belong to the genre of keeping regard of blood relations are not as difficult as virtues which belong to the genre of justice and fairness, especially when they relate to the disbelievers. Supporting the weak, helping the poor and treating parents with kindness is not a difficult task. Human nature has strong urges and motives for such virtues; however, to fulfil the obligation of being just and fair, and that too with one's enemies is no easy a task. For this reason, the Almighty has bestowed a special status to such people by stating that He holds such people dear to Him. It also needs to be kept in mind that fulfilling the obligation of justice and fairness is one of the primary objectives for which this *ummah* was instituted. Those who are equally just to both friend and foe, are, in fact its cream and dear to God. Unless a person fulfils this obligation, all his other virtues become ineffective.

اِنَّمَا یَنْهٰىكُمُ اللّٰهُ عَنِ الَّذِیْنَ قٰتَلُوْكُمْ فِی الدِّیْنِ وَ اَخْرَجُوْكُمْ مِّنْ دِیَارِكُمْ وَ ظٰهَرُوْا عَلٰۤى اِخْرَاجِكُمْ اَنْ تَوَلَّوْهُمْ ۚ وَ مَنْ یَّتَوَلَّهُمْ فَاُولٰٓىِٕكَ هُمُ الظّٰلِمُوْنَ ۝[10]

Stated in this verse is exactly what Muslims are stopped from, and with regard to whom. Here, making friends obviously refers to friendship and co-operation with such

10. God only forbids you to make friends with those who have fought against you on account of your religion and driven you from your homes, or helped in driving you out. And those who make friends with such people will only wrong their own souls.

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people against the interest of the Muslim *ummah* so that these people can become a means of fulfilling some individual need of the Muslims who want to befriend them.

A deliberation on this verse will show that the whole emphasis is on the words اَنْ تَوَلَّوْهُمْ. This means that what is prohibited is to make friends with the disbelievers; being just and virtuous to them is not prohibited.

Being virtuous is a one-sided act. It does not depend on the attitude of the person to whom a person is being virtuous. If a person is in need, then it is our moral obligation to help him, whether he is a believer or a disbeliever, and it is essential that in this regard, we do not be desirous of any expression of gratitude from them in return. The words of Sūrah al-Dahr are: اِنَّمَا نُطْعِمُكُمْ لِوَجْهِ اللّٰهِ لَا نُرِيْدُ مِنْكُمْ جَزَآءً وَّ لَا شُكُوْرًا. (٧٦:٩) (we feed you for God's sake only; we seek of you, neither recompense nor gratitude, (76:9)). Even if, because of some reason, we feel enmity for them, the correct attitude for us is still to be virtuous to them. In such cases, showing virtue to them will earn us more rewards, as is specified by the Qur'ān and Ḥadīth.

As far as justice and fairness are concerned, they are based on law, contract and custom. No discrimination can be made in this regard between a believer and a disbeliever or a friend and a foe. The requisite of law and contract shall always be fulfilled; it does not matter whether the issue relates to a friend or an enemy. In the succeeding verses, one can see how the Qur'ān has decided some disputes regarding the disbelievers of the Quraysh and how important a judgement it has made. Moreover, it has emphatically directed Muslims to follow this directive.

The words وَمَنْ يَّتَوَلَّهُمْ فَاُولٰٓئِكَ هُمُ الظّٰلِمُوْنَ imply that Muslims who, even after this warning, sustain friendly ties with these disbelievers, should remember that they will neither be able to harm God in any way nor the cause of Islam; they will in fact be wronging their own souls.

Section III: Verses (10-13)

In the subsequent verses, Muslims are first directed in the light of the first verse of this *sūrah* that they should assess and evaluate the existence and extent of faith in the Muslim women who migrate to them. They must not be included in the ranks of the Muslims merely because they have migrated to them and want to be among them. If it is proven after evaluation that their migration is really for the cause of religion, only then should they be accepted. Similarly, it is not allowed to the immigrants to continue to keep in wedlock their wives who are disbelievers and who reside in Makkah. They should be given the freedom to marry whomever they want to and their dowers should be mutually exchanged.

The second directive was given to the Prophet (sws): he should take a pledge from them to follow all the customs and conventions of the religious life stipulated by Islam. Only if they commit to this condition should this pledge be taken from them.

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Not every type of person is worthy of being included in an Islamic society. Only those have this right who promise to fulfil the requisites of the Islamic faith.

These directives are primarily given to tell the Muslims that Islam and other religions cannot co-exist. Such an amalgamation is against sense and reason. The purity of Islam should be maintained in every sector of human relationship, so that no hint of hypocrisy creeps in. Just as it is not allowed to the Muslims to make friends with the enemies of God and His Prophet, it is also not allowed to them to keep idolatrous women in their wedlock. If such a relationship has existed till now, the time has now arrived to sever it; however, this issue also entailed that another dispute be settled between the Muslims and the Quraysh, which continued to exist between them ever since the truce of Ḥudaybiyyah, and now had assumed such a proportion that it had to be settled.

One of the important statutes of this peace treaty was that if anyone from the Quraysh would defect to the Muslims, even though he be a Muslim, the Muslims would be bound to return him to the Qurasyh. On other hand, if a Muslim defected to the Qurasyh, the latter would not be required to return him. Although there is a difference of opinion between the narrators regarding the words of this statute, however, the words reported by 'Urwah, al-Ḍaḥḥāk, 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Yazīd, al-Zuhrī, Muqātil ibn Hayyān are: لَا يَأْتِيكَ مِنَّا اَحَدٌ وَاِنْ كَانَ عَلٰى دِيْنِكَ اِلَّا رَدَدْتَّهٗ اِلَيْنَا (this peace treaty is concluded on the condition that if anyone from us [—the Quraysh—] whether he is a follower of your [—Muhammad's—] religion defects to you, then you shall necessarily return him).[11]

This statute was accepted by the Muslims as far as men were concerned. Consequently, while complying with it, Abū Jandal (rta) was returned to the Quraysh in very emotional circumstances. This happened right after the treaty had been concluded. However, in the case of women, the Muslims had not clearly accepted this statute, and anyone who is aware of Arabic cannot deny the fact that these words are not explicit regarding returning women who defected to the Muslims.

The text of the contract cited about has the word اَحَدٌ (anyone) which though can be used generally for both genders, yet all the pronouns and verbs which succeed it are masculine. In such a situation, a person can claim that that women are also connoted in اَحَدٌ in general, but, no sensible person can claim that these words are as specific for women as they are for men. In fact, what can be said is that if either of the parties wanted to categorically include women in this statute then some more qualifying words like ذَكَرٌ كَانَ اَوْ اُنْثٰى (whether man or woman) should have been added after اَحَدٌ. However, since no such qualifying words were added, even though the nature of the contract entailed such an addition, then this obviously means that at the time of making this contract both parties did not have women in their minds.

This brevity in the contract naturally resulted in a dispute between the Muslims and

11. Abū 'Abdullāh Muhammad ibn Ismā'īl al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi' al-ṣaḥīḥ*. 3rd ed., vol. 4 (Beirut: Dār Ibn Kathīr, 1987), 1532.

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the Quraysh, and it seems that the dispute assumed great importance during the time of revelation of this *sūrah*. This was because many women also migrated to Madīnah and it became essential that Muslims adopt a definite policy in this regard. Thus, the Almighty revealed a definite directive in this regard, and also specified: ذٰلِكُمْ حُكْمُ اللّٰهِ ۚ يَحْكُمُ بَيْنَكُمْ ۚ وَاللّٰهُ عَلِيْمٌ حَكِيْمٌ (this is the decision of God which He is delivering among you; and God is all-knowing and wise). Readers may now proceed to study these verses in the light of this background.

يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْٓا اِذَا جَآءَكُمُ الْمُؤْمِنٰتُ مُهٰجِرٰتٍ فَامْتَحِنُوْهُنَّ ۭ اَللّٰهُ اَعْلَمُ بِاِيْمَانِهِنَّ ۚ فَاِنْ عَلِمْتُمُوْهُنَّ مُؤْمِنٰتٍ فَلَا تَرْجِعُوْهُنَّ اِلَى الْكُفَّارِ ۭ لَا هُنَّ حِلٌّ لَّهُمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحِلُّوْنَ لَهُنَّ ۭ وَاٰتُوْهُمْ مَّآ اَنْفَقُوْا ۭ وَلَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْكُمْ اَنْ تَنْكِحُوْهُنَّ اِذَآ اٰتَيْتُمُوْهُنَّ اُجُوْرَهُنَّ ۭ وَلَا تُمْسِكُوْا بِعِصَمِ الْكَوَافِرِ وَسْـَٔـلُوْا مَآ اَنْفَقْتُمْ وَلْيَسْـَٔـلُوْا مَآ اَنْفَقُوْا ۭ ذٰلِكُمْ حُكْمُ اللّٰهِ ۭ يَحْكُمُ بَيْنَكُمْ ۭ وَاللّٰهُ عَلِيْمٌ حَكِيْمٌ ﴿١٠﴾ وَاِنْ فَاتَكُمْ شَيْءٌ مِّنْ اَزْوَاجِكُمْ اِلَى الْكُفَّارِ فَعَاقَبْتُمْ فَاٰتُوا الَّذِيْنَ ذَهَبَتْ اَزْوَاجُهُمْ مِّثْلَ مَآ اَنْفَقُوْا ۭ وَاتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ الَّذِيْٓ اَنْتُمْ بِهٖ مُؤْمِنُوْنَ ﴿١١﴾ يٰٓاَيُّهَا النَّبِيُّ اِذَا جَآءَكَ الْمُؤْمِنٰتُ يُبَايِعْنَكَ عَلٰٓى اَنْ لَّا يُشْرِكْنَ بِاللّٰهِ شَيْـــًٔا وَّلَا يَسْرِقْنَ وَلَا يَزْنِيْنَ وَلَا يَقْتُلْنَ اَوْلَادَهُنَّ وَلَا يَاْتِيْنَ بِبُهْتَانٍ يَّفْتَرِيْنَهٗ بَيْنَ اَيْدِيْهِنَّ وَاَرْجُلِهِنَّ وَلَا يَعْصِيْنَكَ فِيْ مَعْرُوْفٍ فَبَايِعْهُنَّ وَاسْتَغْفِرْ لَهُنَّ اللّٰهَ ۭ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ غَفُوْرٌ رَّحِيْمٌ ﴿١٢﴾ يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا لَا تَتَوَلَّوْا قَوْمًا غَضِبَ اللّٰهُ عَلَيْهِمْ قَدْ يَىِٕسُوْا مِنَ الْاٰخِرَةِ كَمَا يَىِٕسَ الْكُفَّارُ مِنْ اَصْحٰبِ الْقُبُوْرِ ﴿١٣﴾

Believers! When believing women seek refuge with you, evaluate them. God already is fully aware of their faith. So, if you find them to be true believers, do not return them to the disbelievers; neither are they lawful for the disbelievers, nor are the disbelievers lawful for them. And hand back to the disbelievers what they have spent. Nor is it an offence for you to marry such women, provided you give them their dowers. And do not continue with your marriages with disbelieving women: and demand what you have spent and let the disbelievers also demand what they spent. This is the decision of God which He is making among you. And God is all-knowing and wise. (10)

And if any portion of your wives' dowers remains with the disbelievers, then, whenever you have the opportunity, pay those whose wives have left them, whatever they have spent on them. And fear God in whom you have professed faith. (11)

Prophet! When believing women come to you and pledge themselves to serve no other deity besides God, to commit neither theft, nor adultery, nor child-murder, nor utter any false allegation related to what is between their hands and feet and will not disobey you in what is according to the norms, accept their allegiance and implore God to forgive them. Indeed, God is Forgiving and Merciful. (12)

Believers! Do not make friends with those who have incurred the wrath of God. Such people despair of the life to come, just as the disbelievers despair of the buried dead. (13)

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Explanation

يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْٓا اِذَا جَآءَكُمُ الْمُؤْمِنٰتُ مُهٰجِرٰتٍ فَامْتَحِنُوْهُنَّ ؕ اَللّٰهُ اَعْلَمُ بِاِيْمَانِهِنَّ ۚ فَاِنْ عَلِمْتُمُوْهُنَّ مُؤْمِنٰتٍ فَلَا تَرْجِعُوْهُنَّ اِلَى الْكُفَّارِ ؕ لَا هُنَّ حِلٌّ لَّهُمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحِلُّوْنَ لَهُنَّ ؕ وَاٰتُوْهُمْ مَّآ اَنْفَقُوْا ؕ وَلَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْكُمْ اَنْ تَنْكِحُوْهُنَّ اِذَآ اٰتَيْتُمُوْهُنَّ اُجُوْرَهُنَّ ؕ وَلَا تُمْسِكُوْا بِعِصَمِ الْكَوَافِرِ وَسْـَٔلُوْا مَآ اَنْفَقْتُمْ وَلْيَسْـَٔلُوْا مَآ اَنْفَقُوْا ؕ ذٰلِكُمْ حُكْمُ اللّٰهِ ؕ يَحْكُمُ بَيْنَكُمْ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ عَلِيْمٌ حَكِيْمٌ ﴿۱۰﴾[12]

Muslims are told that though they are not responsible to return women who migrate to them, as mentioned earlier; however; their faith must be assessed and evaluated, and without this process, they must not be accepted in their community. It should be fully assessed whether their migration is for Islam or for some other reason. If the assessment shows that their migration is because of Islam, then it is not lawful to return them; however, if the result of this evaluation is otherwise, then retaining these women is also not lawful. The reason for this is that the Islamic society is a place for pious men and women; it is not a place for ignoble men and women.

The nature of this evaluation is evident from a narrative of Ibn 'Abbās, narrated thus:

سئل بن عباس كيف كان امتحان رسول الله النساء قال كان يمتحنهن بالله ما خرجت من بغض زوج وبالله ما خرجت رغبة عن أرض إلى أرض وبالله ما خرجت التماس دنيا وبالله ما خرجت إلا حبا لله ورسوله

Ibn 'Abbās was asked: "How did the Prophet (sws) assess women?" He answered: "He would ask them to swear that they have not come because of being displeased with their husbands and swear that they have not come merely because they wanted to change their place and swear that no worldly motive was behind this and swear that they have come only because of their love for God and His Prophet.[13]

The words اَللّٰهُ اَعْلَمُ بِاِيْمَانِهِنَّ form a parenthetical sentence. The implication is that Muslims should try to asses these women by taking oaths from them and by other

12. Believers! When believing women seek refuge with you, evaluate them. God already is fully aware of their faith. So, if you find them to be true believers, do not return them to the disbelievers; neither are they lawful for the disbelievers, nor are the disbelievers lawful for them. And hand back to the disbelievers what they have spent. Nor is it an offence for you to marry such women, provided you give them their dowers. And do not continue with your marriages with disbelieving women: and demand what you have spent and let the disbelievers also demand what they spent. This is the decision of God which He is making among you. And God is all-knowing and wise.

13. Al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmi' al-bayān*, vol. 28, 67.

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means and sources. As far as the reality in this regard is concerned, the Almighty fully knows it. If, in spite of trying, Muslims are not able to get to the truth in this matter, then they have a legitimate excuse before God, and, if these women try to deceive them regarding their faith, then they should know that the Almighty is fully aware of the extent of their faith or lack of it.

The words فَاِنْ عَلِمْتُمُوْهُنَّ مُؤْمِنٰتٍ فَلَا تَرْجِعُوْهُنَّ اِلَى الْكُفَّارِ says that if through available means of assessment, it is proved that they are believing women, then they must not be returned to the disbelievers, because neither are they lawful to the disbelievers, nor are the disbelievers lawful to them; both are mutually unlawful to one another.

With this directive, the Qur'ān, once and for all, decided the dispute which had arisen about a statute of the treaty of Ḥudaybiyyah, and a little deliberation will show that this verdict was very fair. Had the verdict of the Qur'ān been that as per the treaty, Muslims were not bound to return any woman, it would not have been unfair; however, this could have been regarded as an act of purely taking advantage of the words of the treaty. The Qur'ān did not merely take advantage of the words of the treaty, it also gave a verdict based on very sound intellectual and moral basis: it did direct the Muslims to return women who did not migrate for the cause of God and His Prophet (sws), but did so because of some trivial worldly purpose; however, it did not allow those of them to be returned who were proven as believers. This is so principle a statement that no sensible person can refute it. A person is equipped with moral and intellectual sensitivity and it is an obvious injustice to him if he is forced to live in a society where his moral and intellectual identity is not safe; especially women, being the weaker gender, deserve even more to be protected.

The words وَ اٰتُوْهُمْ مَّآ اَنْفَقُوْا depict another verdict given by the Qur'ān. If any of the believing women, who is detained, has remained in the wedlock of a disbeliever, then it is the responsibility of the Muslims to pay back to her husband the dower he had paid her. The public treasury should be utilized for this purpose. Though the words are general in their connotation, yet, since it is the dower which comes in question in case of separation between the spouses, it is the dower which is implied as per this concomitant indication.

The words وَلَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْكُمْ اَنْ تَنْكِحُوْهُنَّ اِذَآ اٰتَيْتُمُوْهُنَّ اُجُوْرَهُنَّ imply that once all these stages pass, if a Muslim wants to marry them, he can do so without any hesitation on the condition that he pays the dower. In other words, he will be liable to pay back the dower paid by the former husband and then to pay a fresh dower to the woman he wants to marry.

The words لَا جُنَاحَ are meant to express the fact that a woman, who has, in this manner, become part of the Muslim society, can re-marry someone here; the fact that she is in the wedlock of a disbeliever in a *dār al-kufr,* or she requires permission from her husband or guardians for marriage cannot hinder this marriage. She is now free of the restraints of her disbelieving husband and relatives, and can exercise her free will within the limits of the *sharī'ah*.

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Consider next the words وَلَا تُمْسِكُوْا بِعِصَمِ الْكَوَافِرِ. The word عِصَمٌ is the plural of عِصْمَةٌ. In this regard, another generous step was taken by Islam and taken absolutely one-sidedly: Muslims were directed to release from wedlock their wives, who were disbelievers and were living in the *dār al-kufr*. They should let them go so that they can marry anyone they wanted to.

After this declaration, the situation that arose is mentioned thus: وَسْـَٔلُوْا مَآ اَنْفَقْتُمْ وَلْيَسْـَٔلُوْا مَآ اَنْفَقُوْا. Believing women who had come to the Muslims no longer remained in the wedlock of their disbelieving husbands, and women who were in the wedlock of Muslims but adhere to disbelief or resided in Makkah no longer remained in the wedlock of their Muslim husbands. As far as their dowers were concerned, they should be mutually exchanged. The dowers given by Muslims to their disbelieving wives will be returned to them by the disbelievers, and the dowers given by the disbelievers to their wives who had become Muslims, will be returned to the disbelievers by the Muslims.

The final words ذٰلِكُمْ حُكْمُ اللّٰهِ ۭ يَحْكُمُ بَيْنَكُمْ ۭ وَاللّٰهُ عَلِيْمٌ حَكِيْمٌ of the verse clarify that this is the verdict of the Qur'ān on the dispute which had arisen between the Quraysh and the Muslims in the interpretation of a statute of the peace treaty of Ḥudaybiyyah regarding returning women. It is evident from this verdict that the Qur'ān did not accept the demand of the Quraysh that as per the terms of the treaty, it was mandatory on the Muslims to return Muslim women who migrated to them. The verdict it gave was just and fair as well as comprehensive which solved a great social dilemma of that time, and also closed the doors to any imminent dispute. Since God is Knowing and Wise, His servants should trust in Him in His verdicts.

وَاِنْ فَاتَكُمْ شَيْءٌ مِّنْ اَزْوَاجِكُمْ اِلَى الْكُفَّارِ فَعَاقَبْتُمْ فَاٰتُوا الَّذِيْنَ ذَهَبَتْ اَزْوَاجُهُمْ مِّثْلَ مَآ اَنْفَقُوْا ۭ وَاتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ الَّذِيْٓ اَنْتُمْ بِهٖ مُؤْمِنُوْنَ ۝۱۱[14]

The word عَاقَبْتُمْ means صَارَتِ العُقْبَى لَكُمْ ie, "then came your turn or you were given the opportunity."

This verse informs Muslims what to do, if a situation arises in which the disbelievers violate the previously outlined procedure of mutually exchanging dowers. In other words, if they do not return the dower of a woman which was given to her by her Muslim husband, then, in this case it would be rightful of the Muslims that if they have to pay the dower of woman to the disbelievers, then, instead of paying it to them, he should pay to his fellow Muslim who has not been paid the dower of his wife which he has released from his wedlock. This is a fair measure of retaliation suggested

14. And if any portion of your wives' dowers remains with the disbelievers, then, whenever you have the opportunity, pay those whose wives have left them whatever they have spent on them. And fear God in whom you have professed faith.

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by the Qur'ān and was allowed by it because one of the parties was being unjust.

The words caution the Muslims from benefitting from this permission. Muslims should fear God in whom they have professed faith even while dealing with their enemies. They should neither look for excuses for this retaliatory measure, without any sound reason nor should they try to benefit more than what is their due.

يٰٓاَيُّهَا النَّبِيُّ اِذَا جَآءَكَ الْمُؤْمِنٰتُ يُبَايِعْنَكَ عَلٰٓى اَنْ لَّا يُشْرِكْنَ بِاللّٰهِ شَيْـًٔا وَّلَا يَسْرِقْنَ وَلَا يَزْنِيْنَ وَلَا يَقْتُلْنَ اَوْلَادَهُنَّ وَلَا يَاْتِيْنَ بِبُهْتَانٍ يَّفْتَرِيْنَهٗ بَيْنَ اَيْدِيْهِنَّ وَاَرْجُلِهِنَّ وَلَا يَعْصِيْنَكَ فِيْ مَعْرُوْفٍ فَبَايِعْهُنَّ وَاسْتَغْفِرْ لَهُنَّ اللّٰهَ ۭ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ غَفُوْرٌ رَّحِيْمٌ ﴿١٢﴾[15]

Just as the Muslims were directed to assess the extent of faith of the women who had migrated to them, they are directed in this verse to not accept any woman in their ranks who come over to them to embrace Islam. A pledge should be sought from them to obey all the good enjoined by Islam and to promise to specially refrain from all the sins which are rampant in the *jāhiliyyah* society so that the germs of these sins do not spread in the Islamic society.

Here, it must be kept in mind that this directive was given in the time when like men, women, too, were coming to the Prophet (sws) to pledge Islam in multitudes, and many of these women belonged to the morally decrepit sections of the society in the time of *jāhiliyyah*. Such a situation entailed that they be specially asked to refrain from sins so that they are informed of the characteristics of the new society they are entering into, and they enter it with the will to change themselves. The sins from which the Prophet (sws) has been directed to seek a pledge from are the following.

The first of them is that they will not associate anyone with God: اَنْ لَّا يُشْرِكْنَ بِاللّٰهِ شَيْـًٔا. The foundation of the whole religion is the pure belief of monotheism. For this reason, the first directive given was to ask them to give their word that they will refrain from polytheism. For an average mind, the path to monotheism opens by denouncing polytheism. If a comprehension of safeguarding one self from polytheism does not exist, then many people claim to be adherents of pure monotheism, in spite of being incriminated with all the practices of polytheism.

The second of them is that they should not steal: وَلَا يَسْرِقْنَ. In other words, just as it is wrong to infringe upon the rights of God, it is equally wrong and forbidden to infringe upon the rights of human beings.

The third of these directives is that they should not commit adultery: وَلَا يَزْنِيْنَ. I have

15. Prophet! When believing women come to you and pledge themselves to serve no other deity besides God, to commit neither theft, nor adultery, nor child-murder, nor utter any false allegation related to what is between their hands and feet and will not disobey you in what is according to the norms, accept their allegiance and implore God to forgive them. Indeed, God is Forgiving and Merciful.

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been referring to the similarity between adultery and polytheism at many places of this exegesis. Repetition thus is not required here.

The fourth directive is that they will not kill their children: وَلَا يَقْتُلْنَ اَوْلَادَهُنَّ. In the age of *jāhilliyah*, children were killed not only because of polytheistic superstitions, but also because of poverty and an ill sense of honour. In this age, other motives of infanticide have arisen and are well-known. This prohibition embraces all these cases.

The fifth directive is that they will not falsely blame either a man or a woman regarding anything which is between the hands and the feet: وَ لَا يَاْتِيْنَ بِبُهْتَانٍ يَّفْتَرِيْنَهٗ بَيْنَ اَيْدِيْهِنَّ وَ اَرْجُلِهِنَّ. In my opinion, these words refer to the sexual organs. These organs are located between the hands and the feet. This is a very polite style to refer to them. It camouflages what is said, yet comprehensively covers every detail. In a very decent manner, it alludes to all the accusations which relate to sex, like adultery and sexual advances like kissing and fondling.

To falsely accuse someone is a very grave matter; however, if an accusation relates to sexual issues, its severity increases manifold. This is because, such an accusation is a dangerous attack on the repute and character of a person. Such an attitude may result in rows and trying situations, which at times cannot be curbed. Whether such an accusation is made by a man or a woman, it is a great sin for both and the *sharī'ah* has regarded it to be a crime for both. Here, however, women have been particularly stopped from indulging in it, because a sexual accusation by a woman is a very grave attack, against which defence is extremely difficult.

Our exegetes have generally interpreted these words to mean that a woman should not attribute her pregnancy caused by some other man to her husband. I cannot understand the reason for limiting the sphere of these words. I have interpreted them in a wider sense above so that their sphere of application includes everything which should come under them.

The sixth directive is that they will not disobey the Prophet (sws) in any *ma'rūf*: وَلَا يَعْصِيْنَكَ فِيْ مَعْرُوْفٍ. The word مَعْرُوف (*ma'rūf*) occurs in contrast to the word مُنْكَر (*munkar*). All the previously mentioned things relate to what is *munkar*. They do not relate to what is *ma'rūf* like the prayer, the fast, the *ḥajj* and justice and fairness. The reason for this, as is alluded to before, is that the verse mentions the women from whom this pledge is to be taken, who are entering the folds of Islam in large numbers after the conquest of Makkah and who were incriminated with the sins mentioned here which were rampant in the age of *jāhiliyyah*. This special situation entailed that the pledge of refraining from the *munkarāt* (plural of *munkar*) be taken from them in detail, while the pledge to adhere to the *ma'rūfāt* (plural of *ma'rūf*) be taken in a general manner that they will not disobey that Prophet (sws) in any of the *ma'rūfāt* of the *sharī'ah*. The *ma'rūfāt* of the *sharī'ah* are well known and hence require no detail here.

Some people have interpreted the words فِيْ مَعْرُوْفٍ as a conditional phrase and infer from this that in Islam, obedience to even the Prophet (sws) is conditional to what is

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ma'rūf, let alone others. In my opinion, this inference is far-fetched. A prophet neither directs his people to do anything *munkar,* nor is he capable of doing it. He always directs people to do what is *ma'rūf* in religion, because he is constantly under divine protection, and his status is that of a barometer, which distinguishes good from evil because of which, obeying him is an essential requisite of faith. When he, himself, is the barometer of what is *ma'rūf* and what is *munkar*, how can anyone else regard a thing which emanates from him to be against *ma'rūf?* The only condition that can be imposed on pledging a covenant at the hands of the Prophet (sws), is that of one's strength and capacity, and it is evident from certain narratives that the Prophet (sws) would remind people of this condition and have it imposed. However, imposing the condition of *ma'rūf* is absolutely meaningless in this case. Nevertheless, the pledge made at the hands of the Companions and successors of the Prophet (sws), shall be conditional to *ma'rūf* because there is a chance in their case that they give a directive which is against the *ma'rūf.* Consequently, after the Prophet (sws), no one has the right to take a pledge of absolute obedience from people.

The manner in which the Prophet (sws) took this pledge from women is mentioned in the narratives. It can have various forms which are recorded in them. What is absolutely evident from them is that the Prophet (sws) never took their hands in his own when he was taking this pledge.

The words فَبَايِعْهُنَّ وَاسْتَغْفِرْ لَهُنَّ اللّٰهَ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ غَفُوْرٌ رَّحِيْمٌ direct the Prophet (sws) to enter into this covenant with women who pledge to refrain from all these *munkarāt* and to adhere to all the *ma'rūfāt* and that he should seek God's forgiveness, so that any previous blemishes are forgiven by Him. This is because He is Forgiving and Merciful; He will have mercy on them.

يٰۤاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا لَا تَتَوَلَّوْا قَوْمًا غَضِبَ اللّٰهُ عَلَيْهِمْ قَدْ يَئِسُوْا مِنَ الْاٰخِرَةِ كَمَا يَئِسَ الْكُفَّارُ مِنْ اَصْحٰبِ الْقُبُوْرِ ﴿۱۳﴾[16]

In this final verse, the same subject with which the *sūrah* began is once again referred to. There exist several examples in the Qur'ān in which a *sūrah* ends on the same subject as the one with which it commenced. This fact, in itself, is a great argument for the existence of coherence in the Qur'ān.

The first verse began with the words: يٰۤاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا لَا تَتَّخِذُوْا عَدُوِّيْ وَعَدُوَّكُمْ اَوْلِيَآءَ (Believers! Do not befriend those who are My enemies and yours). The Jews as well as the idolaters were the enemies of God. The *musabbiḥāt sūrahs,* which have preceded this *sūrah,* mention mostly the conspiracies of the Jews and their compatriots, and Muslims have been directed to stay away from them. Now, in this final verse, Muslims are warned that friendship, either with the Jews or with the Idolaters cannot

16. Believers! Do not make friends with those who have incurred the wrath of God. Such people despair of the life to come, just as the disbelievers despair of the buried dead.

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be of any good to them. Both these denominations are of the same level as far as their beliefs and practices are concerned, and are going to meet the same fate as well. Whoever becomes their compatriot will also be devastated the way they will be.

The words قَوْمًا غَضِبَ اللّٰهُ عَلَيْهِمْ obviously can only refer to the Jews. The attribute they mention is used for them only by the Qur'ān. Thus, in Sūrah al-Fātihah, the very first *sūrah*, the words are: الْمَغْضُوْبِ عَلَيْهِمْ (those who have incurred the wrath of God).

The words قَدْ يَئِسُوْا مِنَ الْاٰخِرَةِ imply that though these Jews acknowledge the Hereafter, however, their infatuation for worldly pleasures, their greed for wealth and their escapism from death, all bear witness that they do not expect the Hereafter to happen. Had they expected the Hereafter to come, they would never have indulged in practices in which they are now indulging in, and did not desist from it in spite of severe warnings from God.

The words كَمَا يَئِسَ الْكُفَّارُ مِنْ اَصْحٰبِ الْقُبُوْرِ refer to the fact that just as the idolaters do not expect their dead to rise from their graves and say: ءَاِذَا مِتْنَا وَكُنَّا تُرَابًا ۚ ذٰلِكَ رَجْعٌۢ بَعِيْدٌ. (٥٠:٣) (when we are dead and turned to dust? Such a return is most-improbable! (50:3)), in a similar manner, these Jews also do not expect the Hereafter to come. Both are at the same level of expectancy as far as the Hereafter is concerned. It needs to be kept in mind that at many places, the Qur'ān has brought to the fore the similarity between these two religious groups so that the misconception in which Muslims are in, because of regarding the Jews to be the People of the Book, is dispelled, their optimism about them is removed and it becomes evident to them that each is worse than the other.

With the grace of God, with these words I come to the end of this exegesis. وَلِلّٰهِ الْحَمْدُ فِي الْاُوْلٰى وَالْآخِرَةِ (all gratitude be to God from the beginning to the end).

Raḥmānābād
4th March 1978 AD
23rd Rabī' al-Awwal 1398 AH

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Tadabbur i Qur'ān

Sūrah al-Ṣaff (61)

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Sūrah al-Ṣaff

Central Theme and Direction of Address

This *sūrah* addresses those Muslims who, after pledging a covenant of "to listen and to obey" with the Prophet (sws) were evading fighting for the cause of God. They are admonished that if they persist with this attitude even after this pledge, then they should remember that they will meet the same fate as that of the Jews. They disobeyed their prophet Moses (sws) at every step after pledging obedience to him. They were punished by God at this attitude, such that He led their hearts astray and they were forever deprived of guidance. Consequently, when Jesus (sws) brought to them glad tidings of a final prophet and worked open miracles before them, they regarded these miracles to be magic and rejected them. Now, they have adopted a hostile attitude against Islam, even though it is bound to prevail in Arabia over all the religions present, much as they and the idolaters may oppose it.

After that the correct attitude which Muslims should adopt is delineated, and which is an obvious outcome of the pledge they had made with the Messenger of God. They are simultaneously given glad tidings of the great victory which they will achieve in the near future if they strongly adhere to their promise.

At the end of the *sūrah*, Muslims are presented with the exemplary attitude of a group which outdid one another to adopt the truth and by supporting its cause.

Relationship with the Previous *Sūrah*

Reflection on the contents of this *sūrah* will show that, just as in the previous Madīnan *sūrahs*, the character of the hypocrites is discussed, in this *sūrah* too, the character of their factions is discussed. The only difference is that the hypocrites who were discussed in the previous *sūrahs,* were entangled in external problems and impediments besides their inner-weaknesses. However, in this *sūrah* and in the subsequent Madīnan *sūrahs*, those hypocrites are discussed who were mostly inflicted with inner-weaknesses. For example, in this *sūrah* and in Sūrah al-Jumu'ah, which is the next *sūrah* and a counterpart of this *sūrah*, the ailment of love for life and wealth is pinpointed.

Analysis of the Discourse

Verses (1-4): In the introductory part of the *sūrah*, a warning is sounded to those, who, even after pledging a covenant of *sam'u ṭā'at* (to listen and obey) at the hands of the Prophet (sws), were abstaining from fighting in the way of God. They are informed

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that this attitude of breaking the covenant after pledging it is something which is more condemnable in the eyes of the Almighty. He is pleased by those who, in accordance with the requisites of the covenant pledged, gather all their energy whenever the need arises to fight, and fight as if they are a solid cohesive structure.

Verses (5-9): Those who desist from fighting in the cause of God, after they have accepted faith and pledged their obedience, are similar to the Jews and they shall meet a similar fate as well. They had adopted a similar attitude towards their own prophet as well: they would fervently pledge obedience to him, but whenever they were tested by an occasion they would prove worthless. The prophet Moses (sws), often sorrowfully complained about this behaviour, but they never mended their ways. The Almighty, according to His laws, therefore, took away from them the ability to understand and remain on the right path because of their own wrong attitude. They had adopted this improper behaviour with the prophet Jesus (sws) as well. He had shown them some striking miracles, and in very clear words, gave them glad tidings of the last of the prophets. The Jews, however, as a result of their unbecoming attitude, dismissed these miracles as acts of magic and rejected his prophethood. They persisted with this attitude and today, are showing hostility to Islam on the basis of lies and falsehood, even though these efforts will be in vain. Islam is the glowing light of the Almighty which they can never blow to extinction. Contrary to their wishes and those of the idolaters, it shall achieve its supremacy over other religions of Arabia.

Verses (10-13): The weaker Muslims are urged to adopt the right path and refrain from their attitude of distrust and hypocrisy. They should truly profess faith in God and the Prophet (sws), and fight for the cause of Islam by spending as much as they can for this cause and by presenting their lives for it. This is the true path of success if they would only try to understand. If they adopt this attitude, they would attain salvation in the Hereafter, which is the real success and, in this world also, the Almighty, through this well-earned help shall also bless them with the conquest of Makkah they desire so much.

Verses (14): The addressees of the *sūrah* are exhorted to follow the footsteps of the disciples of Jesus (sws). In the beginning of the *sūrah*, Muslims had been advised not to follow the Jews. Here, at the end, they have been urged to follow a group which had remained on the right path and whose correct attitude of taking the initiative in accepting the truth was ultimately responsible for the supremacy of the believers.

Text and Translation

Section I: Verses (1-9)

بِسۡمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحۡمٰنِ الرَّحِيۡمِ

سَبَّحَ لِلّٰهِ مَا فِي السَّمٰوٰتِ وَمَا فِي الۡاَرۡضِ ۚ وَهُوَ الۡعَزِيۡزُ الۡحَكِيۡمُ ۝١ يٰۤاَيُّهَا الَّذِيۡنَ اٰمَنُوۡا لِمَ تَقُوۡلُوۡنَ مَا لَا تَفۡعَلُوۡنَ ۝٢

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كَبُرَ مَقْتًا عِنْدَ اللّٰهِ اَنْ تَقُوْلُوْا مَا لَا تَفْعَلُوْنَ ۝٣ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ يُحِبُّ الَّذِيْنَ يُقَاتِلُوْنَ فِيْ سَبِيْلِهٖ صَفًّا كَاَنَّهُمْ بُنْيَانٌ مَّرْصُوْصٌ ۝٤ وَاِذْ قَالَ مُوْسٰى لِقَوْمِهٖ يٰقَوْمِ لِمَ تُؤْذُوْنَنِيْ وَقَدْ تَّعْلَمُوْنَ اَنِّيْ رَسُوْلُ اللّٰهِ اِلَيْكُمْ ۭ فَلَمَّا زَاغُوْٓا اَزَاغَ اللّٰهُ قُلُوْبَهُمْ ۭ وَاللّٰهُ لَا يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الْفٰسِقِيْنَ ۝٥ وَاِذْ قَالَ عِيْسَى ابْنُ مَرْيَمَ يٰبَنِيْٓ اِسْرَاۗءِيْلَ اِنِّيْ رَسُوْلُ اللّٰهِ اِلَيْكُمْ مُّصَدِّقًا لِّمَا بَيْنَ يَدَيَّ مِنَ التَّوْرٰىةِ وَمُبَشِّرًۢا بِرَسُوْلٍ يَّاْتِيْ مِنْۢ بَعْدِي اسْمُهٗٓ اَحْمَدُ ۭ فَلَمَّا جَاۗءَهُمْ بِالْبَيِّنٰتِ قَالُوْا هٰذَا سِحْرٌ مُّبِيْنٌ ۝٦ وَمَنْ اَظْلَمُ مِمَّنِ افْتَرٰى عَلَي اللّٰهِ الْكَذِبَ وَهُوَ يُدْعٰٓى اِلَى الْاِسْلَامِ ۭ وَاللّٰهُ لَا يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الظّٰلِمِيْنَ ۝٧ يُرِيْدُوْنَ لِيُطْفِـــُٔوْا نُوْرَ اللّٰهِ بِاَفْوَاهِهِمْ وَاللّٰهُ مُتِمُّ نُوْرِهٖ وَلَوْ كَرِهَ الْكٰفِرُوْنَ ۝٨ هُوَ الَّذِيْٓ اَرْسَلَ رَسُوْلَهٗ بِالْهُدٰى وَدِيْنِ الْحَقِّ لِيُظْهِرَهٗ عَلَي الدِّيْنِ كُلِّهٖ وَلَوْ كَرِهَ الْمُشْرِكُوْنَ ۝٩

In the name of God, the Most Gracious, the Ever Merciful.

All that is in the heavens and the earth gives glory to God. He is the Mighty, the Wise One. (1)

Believers! Why do say something you never do? It is most detestable in God's sight that you should say something what you never do. God holds dear those who fight for His cause as if they are one solid wall. (2-4)

And remember, when Moses (sws) said to his people: "O People of Mine! Why do you torment me even though you know very well that I have come to you as a messenger of God?" So when they went astray, God led their very hearts astray. And God does not guide the evil-doers. (5)

And remember when Jesus, son of Mary said: "O Israelites! I am sent forth to you as a messenger of God in realisation of the predictions which exist before me in the Torah, and to give glad tidings of a Messenger who will come after me. His name is Aḥmad." So, when he came to them with clear signs, they said: "This is plain magic." (6)

And who can be more unjust than the person who fabricates a falsehood about God, even though He is being called to Islam? And God does not guide the wrongdoers. They seek to extinguish the light of God with blows of their mouths; but God will perfect His light, much as the disbelievers may dislike it. It is He who has sent forth His Messenger with guidance and the true religion so that he may make it prevail over all religions, much as the idolaters may dislike it. (7-9)

Explanation

سَبَّحَ لِلّٰهِ مَا فِي السَّمٰوٰتِ وَمَا فِي الْاَرْضِ ۚ وَهُوَ الْعَزِيْزُ الْحَكِيْمُ ۝١[1]

The purpose of this verse can be to urge the addressees and also to express self-sufficiency. In the subsequent verses, the hypocrites who were shirking the responsibility of *jihād,* are rebuked for breaching their promise and for showing

1. All that is in the heavens and the earth gives glory to God. He is the Mighty, the Wise One.

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cowardice. Both the above-mentioned objectives can relate to this topic. If the first of them is implied, then the meaning of the verse would be: it is a pity if someone evades *jihād* in the cause of the God, Who is ardently glorified and worshipped by every object of this universe and Whose Might prevails over everything and Whose wisdom is found in every work He does.

If the second of the above-mentioned objective is implied, then the meaning would be: when every object of this universe is fervently glorifying and worshipping God, and He alone is the real Mighty and Wise Being little does He care if some cowardly people desist from undertaking *jihād* for His cause.

Also worthy of note is the fact that the word used in this *sūrah* is سَبَّحَ while in the next, it is يُسَبِّحُ. The difference in both these styles is that the past tense is used for statement of a fact and reality, while the imperfect tense (*muḍāri'*) is used for portrayal and for the depiction of continuity.

The occurrence of the attributes الْعَزِيْزُ الْحَكِيْمُ without any particle of conjunction bears evidence to the fact that they simultaneously occur in the noun they qualify. In other words, God, at the same time is dominant on everything and every act that emanates from Him is replete with wisdom. The implication of these attributes is; who can be more worthy of being trusted than the being who possesses these attributes? Unfortunate are the people who do not repose trust, even in such a being.

يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا لِمَ تَقُوْلُوْنَ مَا لَا تَفْعَلُوْنَ ۝٢ كَبُرَ مَقْتًا عِنْدَ اللّٰهِ اَنْ تَقُوْلُوْا مَا لَا تَفْعَلُوْنَ ۝٣[2]

Though the address is general, it is directed at those Muslims who would claim to be highly committed to faith and Islam and to spending and *jihād* for the cause of God yet when the time to prove themselves arrived, they would turn out to be absolute cowards. It is they, who are addressed and rebuked; why do they claim something when they do not have the guts to fulfill it? if they think that by merely proclaiming their commitment to *jihād* would be enough, then this notion of theirs is baseless. This attitude will not earn them the pleasure of God; it will only earn them His wrath and anger, for their attitude amounts to sheer hypocrisy.

The importance of a person's words depends on his sincerity and righteousness. If a person in the very first phases refuses to help someone who was seeking his help, even though he was capable enough to do so, then this refusal would be against decency, sympathy and Islamic brotherhood and an act disliked by God. However, a person who fully assured a needy person of his help, yet, when the time came to fulfil his commitment, deceived him, then such a person will earn much greater wrath and dislike of the Almighty that the first person.

This attitude is condemnable in every case; however, if the matter relates to the

2. Believers! Why do say something you never do? It is most detestable in God's sight that you should say something what you never do.

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Prophet (sws) and to those who profess faith in him, then its gravity increases even more. People, who do not accept the message of a prophet of God are worthy of His wrath as they should be; however, much more worthy of His wrath are those people who verbally claim their commitment to everything that is required but practically are not able to fulfil it or are only able to fulfil those commitments which suit their desires and when some important issue arises they adopt an evasive attitude. Obviously, such an attitude is more dangerous than that of open enemies of religion because they are the enemies in the garb of friends. It was as if they committed high treason against the army they were a part of.

Another reason, because of which they became worthy of the wrath of God was that once they accepted Islam, it was as if they acknowledged it as something which appealed to them and satisfied their intellect. From this aspect, their case is different from those who are the enemies of Islam because they have yet to understand it at the very outset. If a person does not understand something, then, this is, after all an excuse on the basis of which he can be granted concession. However, if people who have acknowledged that they have understood it, start evading its practical requisites, then this can only be because of their moral weakness. Such a weakness cannot become an excuse for anyone. In every case, it is a wrongdoing which will entail God's wrath and abhorrence.

اِنَّ اللّٰهَ يُحِبُّ الَّذِيْنَ يُقَاتِلُوْنَ فِيْ سَبِيْلِهٖ صَفًّا كَاَنَّهُمْ بُنْيَانٌ مَّرْصُوْصٌ ﴿۴﴾[3]

This verse unfolds the weakness on which they have been rebuked. It is evident from this verse that a special weakness they were inflicted with was that in order to lay claim to their sincerity and commitment to lay down their lives if needed, they would express fervour to undertake *jihād*; however, once they were asked to do it, they would evade it. In Sūrah al-Nisā', this weakness of theirs is referred to in the following words:

اَلَمْ تَرَ اِلَى الَّذِيْنَ قِيْلَ لَهُمْ كُفُّوْٓا اَيْدِيَكُمْ وَ اَقِيْمُوا الصَّلٰوةَ وَ اٰتُوا الزَّكٰوةَ ۚ فَلَمَّا كُتِبَ عَلَيْهِمُ الْقِتَالُ اِذَا فَرِيْقٌ مِّنْهُمْ يَخْشَوْنَ النَّاسَ كَخَشْيَةِ اللّٰهِ اَوْ اَشَدَّ خَشْيَةً. (۴:۷۷)

Have you not seen those who were told: "Abstain your hands and show diligence in the prayer and pay the *zakāh*," [they would show haste for war]; however, when war was made mandatory upon them, one group among them feared people the way they should fear God or even more. (4:77)

In Sūrah al-Tawbah, these people are rebuked in the followed way:

3. God holds dear those, who fight for His cause as if they are one solid wall.

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يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا مَا لَكُمْ اِذَا قِيْلَ لَكُمُ انْفِرُوْا فِيْ سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ اثَّاقَلْتُمْ اِلَى الْاَرْضِ. (٩:٣٨)

Believers! What has happened to you that when you are ordered: "Fight for the cause of God," you drop to the ground? (9:38)

Such was the cowardice in them that even if they would hesitantly set off for *jihād*, they would not have the courage to fight in a united and cohesive manner; their persistent effort would be to somehow save their skins. In Sūrah al-Tawbah, their cowardice is portrayed thus:

لَوْ يَجِدُوْنَ مَلْجَاً اَوْ مَغٰرٰتٍ اَوْ مُدَّخَلًا لَّوَلَّوْا اِلَيْهِ وَهُمْ يَجْمَحُوْنَ. (٩:٥٧)

If they are able find a shelter or a cave or any refuge, they will cut lose their strings and run towards it. (9:57)

While pointing to such weaknesses of these people, they are told that their effort of pleasing God by merely making tall claims, will only hasten his wrath and anger. God never likes people who show off, and are devoid of the spirit of sacrifice. He holds only those people as dear who fight for His cause like one solid mass, and stare the enemy in its eye.

The word بُنْيَانٌ means "a building;" however, here, it refers to a wall. If a single brick of a wall is displaced from its position, it becomes very easy to dismantle it. For this reason, Muslims are warned in Sūrah al-Anfāl that in case of a formal army attack if a soldier of that army runs away from the position he was deployed, then he earns the wrath of God and Hell will be his abode: فَقَدْ بَآءَ بِغَضَبٍ مِّنَ اللّٰهِ وَمَاْوٰهُ جَهَنَّمُ ۭ وَبِئْسَ الْمَصِيْرُ. (٨:١٦) (so, he returned with the wrath of God and Hell shall be his home, and it is an evil abode, (8:16)).

وَاِذْ قَالَ مُوْسٰى لِقَوْمِهٖ يٰقَوْمِ لِمَ تُؤْذُوْنَنِيْ وَقَدْ تَّعْلَمُوْنَ اَنِّيْ رَسُوْلُ اللّٰهِ اِلَيْكُمْ ۭ فَلَمَّا زَاغُوْٓا اَزَاغَ اللّٰهُ قُلُوْبَهُمْ ۭ وَاللّٰهُ لَا يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الْفٰسِقِيْنَ ۝[4]

The verse explains the attitude of the hypocrites by citing the example of the Jews. They would express great zeal and enthusiasm for *jihād,* but when the time would come, they would back away. When Moses (sws) asked them to attack the Palestinians, they told him that the Palestinians are a very strong and powerful people and they would not like to succumb to their might; that Moses (sws) and his God

4. And remember when Moses (sws) said to his people: "O People of Mine! Why do you torment me, even though you know very well that I have come to you as a messenger of God?" So when they went astray, God led their very hearts astray. And God does not guide the evil-doers.

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should go and fight them and that until these Palestinians vacated the city they do not have the courage to enter it.

The Jews adopted the same attitude in their war, as mentioned in Sūrah al-Baqarah. With great zeal, they asked the prophet Samuel (sws) to select for them a leader for this *jihād*; however, when this selection was made, they withdrew from the whole campaign.

A study of the Torah reveals that there was not a single instance in which they whole-heartedly obeyed Moses (sws). Many a time did Moses (sws) pitifully express his sorrow and anger on their attitude, and even rebuked them in very stern words; however, they never changed their attitude; in fact, their hearts grew more callous as time passed.

The section of the verse: يٰقَوْمِ لِمَ تُؤْذُوْنَنِيْ وَقَدْ تَّعْلَمُوْنَ اَنِّيْ رَسُوْلُ اللّٰهِ اِلَيْكُمْ refers to the sorrows and complaints of Moses (sws), which he repeatedly expressed at their disobedience and violation of promises. The Torah is also replete with these expressions. The Jews had no doubts on the prophethood of Moses (sws). In spite of being convinced that he was a prophet of God, they continued to disobey him, because of their own greed for worldly pleasures, lack of courage and meanness.

The words فَلَمَّا زَاغُوْٓا اَزَاغَ اللّٰهُ قُلُوْبَهُمْ express the punishment which God repeatedly meted out to them, as per His unalterable practice: when, after constant warnings and reminders, they did not rectify the direction of their hearts, the Almighty twisted them in the same direction they chose for themselves. It is a permanent feature of human temperament that it will adapt to whatever circumstances it is conditioned to. If a person tries to mould it to ways which are against the norms of sense and reason, it initially resists this; however, if a person remains adamant on this, his temperament will adapt and accept this change.

The practice of God in providing guidance to human beings or depriving them of it, is in accordance with this feature of their temperament. The Almighty does not forcibly guide a person or lead him astray. He has bestowed man with the awareness of good and evil and given him the freedom to choose between the two. If a person adopts good, the Almighty facilitates him on this and augments his passion for it, and if he adopts evil, the Almighty, at times, also gives him the chance and respite to do so.

The words وَاللّٰهُ لَا يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الْفٰسِقِيْنَ express the fact that it is not the Almighty's way of doing things that He forcibly guides a person who himself likes to go astray. He guides only those who honour and value guidance and themselves want to be guided.

This, as alluded to above, is a warning sounded to the hypocrites that if they, too, follow the attitude adopted by the Jews, their hearts shall also be led astray, in the same way the hearts of the Jews were. Then, they will continue to tread on the wrong path, and will be deprived of the urge and the will to tread the right path.

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وَاِذْ قَالَ عِيْسَى ابْنُ مَرْيَمَ يٰبَنِيْٓ اِسْرَآءِيْلَ اِنِّيْ رَسُوْلُ اللّٰهِ اِلَيْكُمْ مُّصَدِّقًا لِّمَا بَيْنَ يَدَيَّ مِنَ التَّوْرٰىةِ وَمُبَشِّرًا بِرَسُوْلٍ يَّاْتِيْ مِنْۢ بَعْدِي اسْمُهٗٓ اَحْمَدُ ؕ فَلَمَّا جَآءَهُمْ بِالْبَيِّنٰتِ قَالُوْا هٰذَا سِحْرٌ مُّبِيْنٌ ۝[5]

This verse points to the fact that it is because their hearts had been led astray that they were deprived of professing faith in Jesus (sws), and today are also involved in the foolishness of rejecting the last Messenger of God, whose arrival had been predicted by Jesus (sws). The fact however is that the light of God shall be perfected; neither will they be able to harm it, nor the idolaters.

Jesus (sws) is the last messenger among the Israelites. He is mentioned here to show that the attitude which they adopted with Moses (sws) and were cursed as a result, continued to be an essential part of their personalities till the end. Thus, it was because of this attitude that they also rejected Jesus (sws), and are now opposing Islam. The implication is that so fatal is this ailment that once a person is inflicted with it, it becomes impossible for him to do away with it. One should thus avoid being afflicted with it.

The words مُّصَدِّقًا لِّمَا بَيْنَ يَدَيَّ مِنَ التَّوْرٰىةِ were uttered by Jesus (sws) to substantiate his messengerhood. His arrival verified the predictions which were found about him in the Torah. The clearest prediction regarding Jesus (sws) had been made by his predecessor: the prophet John (sws). The latter declared that the sole purpose of his coming was to give glad tidings of a messenger who was to follow him. While giving these glad tidings about Jesus (sws), he also referred to the predictions about him that were already mentioned in the Torah because of which people were waiting for his arrival. All these facts have been stated at various appropriate places in this *tafsīr*. It would not be possible to reproduce them here.

The literal meaning of مُّصَدِّقًا لِّمَا بَيْنَ يَدَيَّ has already been discussed at an earlier instance. People who interpret this phrase to mean that Jesus (sws) is one who verifies the Torah have neither been able to understand the true context and background of these words nor were able to ascertain its true meaning. Jesus (sws) did not utter these words to say that he believed in the Torah; he actually uttered them, as referred to above, to attest to his own prophethood and messengerhood. Wherever these words occur in the Qur'ān, they occur in this context. For this purpose, it would be meaningless for him to attest the Torah. If he attested to the Torah, then this would only prove that he believed in the Torah. How can it prove his own messengerhood? Furthermore, it also should be kept in mind that not every portion of the Torah was attested to by Jesus (sws) or Muḥammad (sws). In fact, Jesus (sws) unveiled its

5. And remember, when Jesus, son of Mary said: "O Israelites! I am sent forth to you as a messenger of God in realization of the predictions which exist before me, and to give glad tidings of a messenger who will come after me. His name is Ahmad." So, when he came to them with clear signs, they said: "This is plain magic."

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interpolations and so did the Qur'ān. Moreover, the Qur'ān has been even more vehement in criticizing it.

The words وَمُبَشِّرًۢا بِرَسُوْلٍ يَّاْتِيْ مِنْۢ بَعْدِي اسْمُهٗٓ اَحْمَدُ point to the fact that simultaneously, Jesus (sws) also proclaimed his mission of giving glad tidings of a Messenger who will follow him, and whose name would be Aḥmad. As far as the predictions regarding this Messenger are concerned, they were being transmitted from the time of Abraham (sws), as is mentioned in the next *sūrah*. After Abraham (sws), Moses (sws), too, gave these glad tidings. These predictions are also found in various books of the Torah being ascribed to certain other prophets. Whether the People of the Book accept it or not, an unbiased person is compelled to accept the fact that these predictions can only imply Muḥammad (sws). In short, as far as the glad tidings regarding him are concerned, Jesus (sws) is not alone in giving them. However, his predictions are different from the rest in three aspects:

Firstly, he did not regard making this prediction to be a secondary objective of his; he regarded to be his special objective.

Secondly, he ascertained the exact time when this prediction will materialize.

Thirdly, he specified the name of the Prophet (sws) in his prediction.

All these three aspects are very important; for this reason I will now briefly discuss them.

The first of these is very evident from the words of the Qur'ān. An even greater testimony to this is the name of the scripture revealed to him. Authorities are unanimous on that the word "*Injīl*" is a Greek word and means "glad tidings." The question arises that of all divine scriptures why was this scripture chosen to have this name. It is possible that because of their self-fabricated belief about salvation, they interpret this word to refer to the glad tidings of salvation for mankind; however, this interpretation is absolutely childish. The belief of salvation invented by Saint Paul may have some reasoning in his meaningless philosophy; not even the weakest of reasoning to support it, is found in the Gospels. Just as the mission of the prophets of God has remained delivering one of giving glad tidings, delivering warnings has also remained a part of it; in fact, the latter had preponderance in it. Just as both these obligations have been discharged by all the prophets, it has also been discharged by Jesus (sws). He gave glad tidings of success and salvation to those who embrace faith and also warned the disbelievers of Hell. There is no reason, in spite of this that his scripture be specifically called "Good News" (*injīl*). On the other hand, it is quite plausible that this name was given to his scripture because his specific mission and distinguishing feature was to give glad tidings of the last Messenger of God who was to follow him. He was divinely appointed for this mission. For this reason, his scripture was called "Good News" (*injīl*) so that the mere name depicts his mission, and on the Day of Judgement, this name could be used to bear witness against the Christians: they did not profess faith in the same messenger for whom they had been divinely appointed. In this manner, they became the true manifestation of the parable

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of the virgins proclaimed by Jesus (sws): all night they lighted lamps while waiting for the bridegroom; however, at the time of his arrival, the oil in the lamps finished and they went off to sleep.[6]

A deep deliberation on the Gospels will reveal that a very commonly discussed topic in them is the glad tidings for the Kingdom of Heaven. It is discussed in numerous ways in diverse styles and various parables. The feature of this divine kingdom mentioned, the concept of its gradual development given, the traits of those who will be able to enter it and of those who will be deprived of it – a deep reflection will show that all these facets are glad tidings of the prophethood of Muḥammad (sws), and of the blessings of the pious system which spread in the land through the Companions. This is not the right place for a detailed explanation of this issue; otherwise, I would have given examples to duly support my view. However, I do hope that people who will deliberate on the Gospels from this aspect, will agree with me that their real subject is to give glad tiding of the Kingdom of Heaven which was set up through the blessed efforts of the Prophet Muhammad (sws).

The fact that this prediction was made such that the period of its realization was also determined increases its importance a lot. Before it, none of the predictions which have been communicated regarding the advent of Muḥammad (sws) and other prophets contains any information on the time of their advent. All of them depict an undetermined future. However, this prediction specifically mentions that Muḥammad (sws) will be sent after him and that he has been sent to give his glad tidings and pave his way. The question now arises as to who was the personality which appeared after him in this whole world in whom or in the system established by him the traits and parables depicted by Jesus (sws) completely manifested themselves? If a person is not stubborn and obstinate, then none other than the name of Muhammad (sws) can be understood to be implied. If Christians do not want to take this name, then they should relinquish the Gospels. Till when will they keep giving glad tidings of someone who is yet to arrive in two thousand years?

The third aspect is also very important – in fact, it can be regarded to be the most important: the glad tidings given by Jesus (sws) about a messenger to come were given by specifying his name. This meant that the Almighty wanted that there remains nothing concealed and ambiguous about the matter, and everything comes crystal clear. The reason for this being that the obduracy of those who reject this prediction becomes absolutely evident and they are conclusively conveyed this fact by the Almighty.

However, very deplorable is what those people did who drastically altered the names mentioned in the Torah. They either altered them in such a manner that there remains no means to determine their real form, or translated and re-translated them in such a way that the translations were far apart from the actual and it became virtually

6. Matthew, 25:1-6.

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impossible to get to the original.

As an example, I will present the words "Marwah" and "Bakkah." Both these names occur in the Torah. Marwah is the place where Abraham (sws) presented the sacrifice of his son Ishmael (sws), and Bakkah (Makkah) is the place where Abraham (sws) settled Ishmael (sws) and prayed that a messenger should arise from his progeny. Since the Jews were not ready at any cost that Abraham (sws) be linked to Makkah and that the sacrificed son be regarded as Ishmael (sws), they callously obliterated every sign and indication they found against their wish. Thus, the word Marwah was distorted by their scholars and reciters to Mūrah, Mūriyā and Muryā as well as to other similar words. Similarly, they distorted Bakkah to Bukā' and then by naming it the "Valley of Bukā", the translators translate it as the "Valley of Wailing," even though Bakkah and Makkah are synonyms. I have already presented my research on this earlier.[7]

One can imagine what happened to those names mentioned in the Torah and the *Injīl,* which the Jews and Christians found against their objectives. In particular, Aḥmad and Muḥammad are names none of whose letters they could have tolerated. Consequently, it is very evident from the Gospels that Jesus (sws) specified the name in the glad tidings he gave. What becomes simultaneously evident is that the great skill Christian scholars have shown in concealing this name can only be rivalled by the Jewish scholars.

Here I will first cite some references from the Gospel of John which mention these glad tidings about Muhammad (sws). Later, I will discuss some of their special aspects. Jesus (sws) says:

> And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counsellor to be with you forever—the Spirit of truth. (John 14:16-17)
>
> But the Counsellor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you. (John 14:26)
>
> I will not speak with you much longer, for the prince of this world is coming. He has no hold on me. (John 14:30)
>
> When the Counsellor comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who goes out from the Father, he will testify about me. (John 15:26)
>
> But I tell you the truth: It is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Counsellor will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you. (John 16:7)

7. Amīn Ahsan Islāhī, *Tadabbur-i Qur'ān*, vol. 1, 747-748.

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I have much more to say to you, more than you can now bear. But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come. (John 16:12-13)

I have cited these references from the Gospel of John which is acknowledged by all the Christian sects. In the Gospel of Barnabas, the glad tidings of the advent of the last Prophet are repeatedly mentioned by his name Muhammad (sws). I have not cited these references, since the Christians of today, who are followers of Saint Paul, do not regard this Gospel to be authentic.

If the above-cited references are deliberated upon, certain things become very clear:

Firstly, these glad tidings are given with such clear attributes that they cannot be applied to anyone other than Muhammad (sws). Consider the following words:

He will give you another Counsellor to be with you forever. (John 14:17)

He will teach you all things. (John 14:26)

The prince of this world is coming. He has no hold on me. (John 14:30)

If one deliberates on these words, after Jesus (sws), who else but Muḥammad (sws) can be regarded as the implied personality?

Secondly, though the incoherent discourse preceding and succeeding these glad tidings has been deliberately inserted so that the whole meaning becomes confused, yet the interpolators were not successful in their endeavour: the incoherence and lack of connection of these sentences is very evident.

Thirdly, it seems that Jesus (sws) had mentioned a specific word as an attribute of Muhammad (sws). Later translators and exegetes specifically targeted to alter it and tried their best to sever it from its true meaning. Some translated it as "counsellor", some as "advocate," some as "intercessor" and others as the "spirit of truth." As far as the word itself is concerned, it is said that in the Gospel of John in Greek, it is "Paracletus." It is about the meanings of this word cited above that the Christian scholars have done everything they could to alter it. Obviously, this Greek word would be the translation of some Syriac word since the original language of the Gospels was Syriac. Who can now research into what the original word actually was? When, for centuries, a whole nation is after concealing a word, how is it possible to discover it? It is a great favour of the Qur'ān that it gave us some clue of it. Some Muslim historians are of the opinion that the original Syriac word was منحمنا, which in Syriac has the same meaning as محمد and أحمد have in Arabic.

The subject of the verb جَآءَ in فَلَمَّا جَآءَهُمْ بِالْبَيِّنٰتِ قَالُوْا هٰذَا سِحْرٌ مُّبِيْنٌ is Jesus (sws). The implication is that when Jesus (sws) came with clear miracles as a manifestation of the

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predictions which pre-existed about him, and as a deliverer of glad tidings of the last the Prophet, the hearts of the Jews had been led so far away that they regarded all his miracles to be products of magic. Moreover, the Jews also said that whatever miracles Jesus (sws) worked were not related to the help of the Holy Spirit; he is, in fact, helped by a demon called Beelzebub. Some people regard Muḥammad (sws) as the subject of the verb جَآءَ; however, this interpretation is absolutely against the context.

Here, one needs to differentiate between the style of address which is very apparent between Moses (sws) and Jesus (sws). Moses (sws) addressed his people Israelite, by the words "O my Nation;" however, Jesus (sws) addressed them by the words "O Israelites." This was obviously because he was neither related to his nation, nor to any other nation; in fact, he was Jesus, son of Mary. The Qur'ān has taken into account these subtle aspects of address.

وَمَنْ اَظْلَمُ مِمَّنِ افْتَرٰى عَلَى اللّٰهِ الْكَذِبَ وَهُوَ يُدْعٰٓى اِلَى الْاِسْلَامِ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ لَا يَهْدِى الْقَوْمَ الظّٰلِمِيْنَ ۝[8]

This is an expression of pity at the misfortune of the Jews: their very misguided hearts which led them to reject Jesus (sws) were also instrumental in making them reject Islam. They have fabricated all kinds of falsehoods about God.

The expression افْتَرٰى عَلَى اللّٰهِ الْكَذِبَ alludes to those falsehoods they had concocted to prove themselves to be superior and exalted. These included notions as: "we are the chosen and selected people of God;" "How can we be in need of the guidance of a prophet born amongst the unlettered;" "prophethood and messengerhood has always belonged to the Israelites; how can a prophet be born in some other race?"; "we have been directed not to attest to the prophet hood of a person whose offered animal sacrifice is not consumed by fire from the sky." The Qur'ān has refuted all these fabrications in Sūrah al-Baqarah and regarded them to be falsehoods imputed to God; at no place has God said these things. It is by referring to them that it is said that how unfortunate are these people who are being called to Islam, and in response they are trying to deceive themselves by their own self-concocted notions.

The words وَاللّٰهُ لَا يَهْدِى الْقَوْمَ الظّٰلِمِيْنَ are a reference to the practice of God mentioned in verse five earlier. They say that God does not guide people who wrong their own souls. The implication is that God had, in fact, done a favour to them that He guided them about the coming prophet beforehand so that they are able to recognize him themselves and also convince others in recognizing him. However, when they "honoured" this favour of God by obliterating the signs He informed them of, then such wretched people are not guided by God.

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8. And who can be more unjust, than the person who fabricates a falsehood about God, even though He is being called to Islam? And God does not guide the wrongdoers.

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يُرِيْدُوْنَ لِيُطْفِـُٔوْا نُوْرَ اللّٰهِ بِاَفْوَاهِهِمْ وَاللّٰهُ مُتِمُّ نُوْرِهٖ وَلَوْ كَرِهَ الْكٰفِرُوْنَ ۝[9]

This is a parable of their fruitless exercise: negating the guidance of God through their self-fabricated notions and self-invented innovations is much like trying to blow out the light of the sun and the moon. Such an effort will never bear fruit. The Almighty will definitely perfect His light. The half-moon will very soon bloom into full-moon, even though the disbelievers would hate this to happen.

هُوَ الَّذِيْٓ اَرْسَلَ رَسُوْلَهٗ بِالْهُدٰى وَدِيْنِ الْحَقِّ لِيُظْهِرَهٗ عَلَى الدِّيْنِ كُلِّهٖ وَلَوْ كَرِهَ الْمُشْرِكُوْنَ ۝[10]

This verse is an explanation of the words وَاللّٰهُ مُتِمُّ نُوْرِهٖ وَلَوْ كَرِهَ الْكٰفِرُوْنَ of the previous verse: the same God Who has decided to perfect His light, has sent forth His messenger with guidance and the true religion, in order to make it dominant over all the religions of Arabia. This incident is certain to happen even though the idolaters may detest it, and they try to stop it with all their might.

The previous verse has words وَلَوْ كَرِهَ الْكٰفِرُوْنَ which have a general connotation. This verse has words وَلَوْ كَرِهَ الْمُشْرِكُوْنَ which specifically refer to the idolaters of the Quraysh. Together, both these words embrace all the rival forces which at that time were opposing Islam. It is as if they are challenged to do whatever they can to harm this call; however, they will not be able to do so. It is the ultimate decision of God that through this Messenger He will make this religion of truth prevail over all other religions of this land. Consequently, this prediction shall certainly materialize. Very soon, the time came when it was proclaimed that two religions will not be allowed to exist in Arabia; only the religion of God will reign here. This topic is discussed in Sūrah al-Tawbah in these words:

يُرِيْدُوْنَ اَنْ يُّطْفِـُٔوْا نُوْرَ اللّٰهِ بِاَفْوَاهِهِمْ وَيَاْبَى اللّٰهُ اِلَّآ اَنْ يُّتِمَّ نُوْرَهٗ وَلَوْ كَرِهَ الْكٰفِرُوْنَ. هُوَ الَّذِيْٓ اَرْسَلَ رَسُوْلَهٗ بِالْهُدٰى وَدِيْنِ الْحَقِّ لِيُظْهِرَهٗ عَلَى الدِّيْنِ كُلِّهٖ ۙ وَلَوْ كَرِهَ الْمُشْرِكُوْنَ. (٩:٣٢-٣٣)

They want to extinguish the light of God with the blows of their mouths: but God has decided to perfect His light, though these disbelievers detest it. It is He who has sent forth His Messenger with guidance and the true faith that he may make it dominant over all religions, even though these idolaters abhor it. (9:32-33)

Section II: Verses (10-14)

In the previous section, it was stated that it is very wrong of the believers to pledge

9. They seek to extinguish the light of God with the blows of their mouths; but God will perfect His light, much as the disbelievers may dislike it.

10. It is He who has sent forth His Messenger with guidance and the true religion so that he may make it prevail over all religions, much as the idolaters may dislike it.

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a covenant of "to listen and to obey" with the Messenger of God, and when the time comes to honour this covenant, their love for life and wealth stops them from doing so. In this section, they are being informed of the right attitude which can lead them to success in this world as well as the next.

Text and Translation

يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا هَلْ اَدُلُّكُمْ عَلٰى تِجَارَةٍ تُنْجِيْكُمْ مِّنْ عَذَابٍ اَلِيْمٍ ﴿١٠﴾ تُؤْمِنُوْنَ بِاللّٰهِ وَرَسُوْلِهٖ وَتُجَاهِدُوْنَ فِيْ سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ بِاَمْوَالِكُمْ وَاَنْفُسِكُمْ ؕ ذٰلِكُمْ خَيْرٌ لَّكُمْ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُوْنَ ﴿١١﴾ يَغْفِرْ لَكُمْ ذُنُوْبَكُمْ وَيُدْخِلْكُمْ جَنّٰتٍ تَجْرِيْ مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْاَنْهٰرُ وَمَسٰكِنَ طَيِّبَةً فِيْ جَنّٰتِ عَدْنٍ ؕ ذٰلِكَ الْفَوْزُ الْعَظِيْمُ ﴿١٢﴾ وَاُخْرٰى تُحِبُّوْنَهَا ؕ نَصْرٌ مِّنَ اللّٰهِ وَفَتْحٌ قَرِيْبٌ ؕ وَبَشِّرِ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ ﴿١٣﴾ يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا كُوْنُوْٓا اَنْصَارَ اللّٰهِ كَمَا قَالَ عِيْسَى ابْنُ مَرْيَمَ لِلْحَوَارِيّٖنَ مَنْ اَنْصَارِيْٓ اِلَى اللّٰهِ ؕ قَالَ الْحَوَارِيُّوْنَ نَحْنُ اَنْصَارُ اللّٰهِ فَاٰمَنَتْ طَّآئِفَةٌ مِّنْۢ بَنِيْٓ اِسْرَآءِيْلَ وَكَفَرَتْ طَّآئِفَةٌ ۚ فَاَيَّدْنَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا عَلٰى عَدُوِّهِمْ فَاَصْبَحُوْا ظٰهِرِيْنَ ﴿١٤﴾

Believers! Shall I tell you of a deal which will save you from a woeful scourge? Profess faith in God and in His Messenger, and wage war for the cause of God through your wealth and through your persons. This is best for you, if you knew it. God will forgive you your sins and admit you to gardens watered by running streams; and He will lodge you in elegant houses which will be in the gardens of eternity. That, in fact, is the supreme triumph. And another thing which you desire: help from God and a victory in the near future. And give glad tidings to the believers. (10-13)

Believers! Be God's helpers. The way when Jesus, son of Mary, called upon the disciples: "Who will be my helper in the cause of God?" The disciples replied: "We are God's helpers." So, one group from among the Israelites believed in him while another rejected him. So, We helped the believers against their enemies, and they triumphed over them. (14)

Explanation

يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا هَلْ اَدُلُّكُمْ عَلٰى تِجَارَةٍ تُنْجِيْكُمْ مِّنْ عَذَابٍ اَلِيْمٍ ﴿١٠﴾[11]

The implication is that after embracing faith, and after pledging a covenant of "to listen and to obey," if Muslims want to know what the right behaviour is, then the Almighty will inform them of a deal which will salvage them from a painful punishment. The word تِجَارَةٌ (deal) is explained in the next verse: Muslims should be ready to expend their lives and wealth for the cause of God and in return become worthy of God's forgiveness and His Paradise. This is the greatest success to achieve, for which they should launch themselves with full vigour. In the verse under discussion, it is only said that the reward for this would be immunity from the painful

11. Believers! Shall I tell you of a deal which will save you from a woeful scourge?

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punishment of Hell. However, in the next verse, it is explained that such people will be rewarded with all the blessings of the Hereafter and in this world also, they will be rewarded with the great victory they are desirous of. In this verse, only immunity from the torment of the Hereafter is mentioned, because the real objective of a believer should be to shield himself from the punishment of God. If he is able to achieve this, then it is as if he has achieved everything.

تُؤْمِنُوْنَ بِاللّٰهِ وَرَسُوْلِهٖ وَتُجَاهِدُوْنَ فِيْ سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ بِاَمْوَالِكُمْ وَاَنْفُسِكُمْ ؕ ذٰلِكُمْ خَيْرٌ لَّكُمْ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُوْنَ ﴿۱۱﴾ يَغْفِرْ لَكُمْ ذُنُوْبَكُمْ وَيُدْخِلْكُمْ جَنّٰتٍ تَجْرِيْ مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْاَنْهٰرُ وَمَسٰكِنَ طَيِّبَةً فِيْ جَنّٰتِ عَدْنٍ ؕ ذٰلِكَ الْفَوْزُ الْعَظِيْمُ ﴿۱۲﴾[12]

I have alluded to this linguistic style of Arabic that whenever a directive of adopting something or abstaining from it is to be given in the form of exhortation and counsel, then such directives are mentioned in the form of predicate sentences.[13] Thus, in this verse the words تُؤْمِنُوْنَ and تُجَاهِدُوْنَ are apparently in the form of predicates but they imply a directive. The benefit of this style is that it exudes affection for people and exhorts them to undertake a very profitable deal – a deal in which they are to submit their life and wealth to God, in return for an eternal kingdom of heaven.

The words ذٰلِكُمْ خَيْرٌ لَّكُمْ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُوْنَ indicate that though this deal apparently seems non-lucrative because in this a person will have to sacrifice his immediate gain for deferred dividends; however, if people are able to grasp the reality behind it, they will realize that in return for some trivial merchandise and some borrowed moments of life, they have achieved the everlasting treasures of both worlds.

After a brief reference to these treasures of the world, people are exhorted to think that this is the greatest success they have achieved. They cannot achieve any greater success from the meagre sources of life they have. This lucrative deal is mentioned elsewhere in the Qur'ān in these words: اِنَّ اللّٰهَ اشْتَرٰى مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ اَنْفُسَهُمْ وَ اَمْوَالَهُمْ بِاَنَّ لَهُمُ الْجَنَّةَ. (۱۱۱:۹) (God has purchased from the believers their lives and worldly goods in return for Paradise, (9:111)).

وَاُخْرٰى تُحِبُّوْنَهَا ؕ نَصْرٌ مِّنَ اللّٰهِ وَفَتْحٌ قَرِيْبٌ ؕ وَبَشِّرِ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ ﴿۱۳﴾[14]

A reference is made in this verse of an imminent victory in this world.

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12. Profess faith in God and in His Messenger, and wage war for the cause of God through your wealth and through your persons. This is best for you, if you knew it. God will forgive you your sins, and admit you to gardens watered by running streams; And, He will lodge you in elegant houses which will be in the gardens of eternity. That, in fact, is the supreme triumph.

13. Predicate sentences are ones which are in the indefinite tense and occur as the predicate to the subject. (*Translator*)

14. And, another thing which you desire: help from God and a victory in the near future. And give glad tidings to the believers.

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In my opinion, this victory refers to the conquest of Makkah. After migration to Madīnah, the greatest desire every Muslim cherished was the conquest of Makkah. On this victory depended the defeat of the real enemies of God, and it was the greatest evidence of the dominance of the truth. For this reason, every Muslim was desirous of it since it formed the objective of all his endeavours.

The verse says that this victory will be achieved in the near future. This shows that this *sūrah* was revealed close to the conquest of Makkah. Some people are of the opinion that it was revealed near the time of the battle of Uḥud. However, this cannot be regarded correct. The most appropriate source of this *sūrah's* period of revelation could have been this verse, and it is evident from it that the *sūrah* was revealed a little before the conquest of Makkah.

Once the verse mentioned victory, the Almighty bade the Prophet (sws) to give glad tidings to the Muslims that this blessed moment was not far off. It will soon manifest itself. People should keep their morale high and wait for it. The glad tidings of the conquest of Makkah have been given in the Qur'ān in various styles. Though, it cannot be said with certainty, yet it seems from the way these glad tidings appear in this *sūrah* that this was the first instance when that they were given.

يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا كُوْنُوْٓا اَنْصَارَ اللّٰهِ كَمَا قَالَ عِيْسَى ابْنُ مَرْيَمَ لِلْحَوَارِيّٖنَ مَنْ اَنْصَارِيْٓ اِلَى اللّٰهِ ؕ قَالَ الْحَوَارِيُّوْنَ نَحْنُ اَنْصَارُ اللّٰهِ فَاٰمَنَتْ طَّآئِفَةٌ مِّنْۢ بَنِيْٓ اِسْرَآءِيْلَ وَكَفَرَتْ طَّآئِفَةٌ ۚ فَاَيَّدْنَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا عَلٰى عَدُوِّهِمْ فَاَصْبَحُوْا ظٰهِرِيْنَ ﴿١٤﴾[15]

In verse 5, Muslims have been stopped from following the Jews because if Muslim start following them, their hearts will also be led astray like the Jews. In this verse, Muslims are being told that for them, the example set by the disciples of Jesus (sws) is worth following. These disciples did not reject him and in fact when he called them to the cause of God, they responded to his call with full fervour and enthusiasm to help and accompany Jesus (sws) in his mission. At last, it was these committed individuals who became a means for the supremacy of the truth.

It appears that the word *ḥawārī* has come into Arabic from the People of the Book. It means a person who is a zealous and an ardent supporter. It is evident from both the Qur'ān and the Torah that when Jesus (sws) lost hope in the scholars and jurists of the Jews, he presented his message before the poor and the masses and the fishermen who inhabited the seaside. He is reported to have told them: "Come, follow me, and I will show you how to fish for people!" (Matthew, 4:19). At last, it was from among them that a small group of about three hundred odd individuals, embarked upon co-operating with him in his preaching with great zeal.

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15. Believers! Be God's helpers. The way when Jesus, son of Mary, called upon the disciples: "Who will be my helper in the cause of God?" The disciples replied: "We are God's helpers." So, one group from among the Israelites believed in him, while another rejected him. So, We helped the believers against their enemies, and they triumphed over them.

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It is evident from the style adopted by the Qur'ān in مَنْ اَنْصَارِیْٓ اِلَی اللّٰہِ that Jesus (sws) said that he had set off on the straight path delineated by God; those among his disciples who have the courage to accompany him should also set off with him. The disciples responded positively to this call by replying نَحْنُ اَنْصَارُاللّٰہِ.

It is evident from concomitant textual indications that the word طَّآىِٕفَةٌ used in the first instance, connotes a small number and in the second instance to a large number. In other words, a small group of people (the disciples) professed faith, and a large group persisted in disbelief; however, it was the small group which became worthy of God's help and they triumphed over the group of disbelievers. It needs to be understood that ever since the Jews denied Jesus (sws), they were never given political supremacy. In his times, they were subservient to the Romans, and after Constantine converted to Christianity, they have remained subservient to the Christians. Today also they are subservient to the Christians, even though they apparently have an independent state.

At another place, this subject is discussed in the following words:

فَلَمَّآ اَحَسَّ عِیْسٰی مِنْھُمُ الْکُفْرَ قَالَ مَنْ اَنْصَارِیْٓ اِلَی اللّٰہِ ؕ قَالَ الْحَوَارِیُّوْنَ نَحْنُ اَنْصَارُ اللّٰہِ ۚ اٰمَنَّا بِاللّٰہِ ۚ وَاشْھَدْ بِاَنَّا مُسْلِمُوْنَ. رَبَّنَآ اٰمَنَّا بِمَآ اَنْزَلْتَ وَاتَّبَعْنَا الرَّسُوْلَ فَاکْتُبْنَا مَعَ الشّٰھِدِیْنَ. (۳: ۵۲-۵۳)

When Jesus felt disbelief from them [–the scholars of the Jews –], he called: "Who will help me in moving towards God?" The disciples replied: "We are God's helpers. We believe in God and bear witness that we submit to Him. Lord, we professed belief in what you have revealed and we followed the messenger. So, count us among those who bear witness." (3:52-53)

With the help of God, I come to the end of this *sūrah's* exegesis. فالحمد للہ علی ذالک (gratitude be to God for this.)

Raḥmānābād
14th March 1978 AD
3rd Rabī' al-Thānī 1398 AH

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Tadabbur i Qur’ān

Sūrah al-Jumu‘ah (62)

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Sūrah al-Jumu‘ah

Central Theme and relationship with the Preceding *Sūrah*

There is no basic difference between the central themes of Sūrah al-Ṣaff and Sūrah al-Jumu‘ah. Only the style and arguments of both are different. The previous *sūrah* mentions the prediction of Jesus (sws) about Muḥammad (sws). This *sūrah* alludes to the prayer of Abraham (sws); the Ishmaelites are warned to duly honour the favour He has blessed them with by sending Muḥammad (sws) to them, and to not deprive themselves of this great blessing by being misled by the conspiracies of the Jews. In this regard, a group from among the Muslims is rebuked for not showing respect to the Friday prayer and to the Prophet (sws) because of a worldly business need. If the greed of trade and business is dearer to people than showing reverence to the Friday prayer and to the sermon delivered on the day by the Prophet, then this only means that they have not understood the deal of sale and purchase they have struck with their Lord, as is mentioned in the previous *sūrah.* At the same time, they are warned of the fate of their behaviour of disregard and disrespect: the Jews had adopted the same behavior, and, as a result were deprived of the *sharī‘ah* of God; if Muslims want to succeed, they should refrain from following in their footsteps.

Analysis of the Discourse

Verses (1-4): The Ishmaelites are reminded that the Prophet (sws) God had sent towards them is the result of the prayer of their great ancestor, the Prophet Abraham (sws). This is a great favour the Almighty has done them to liberate them from the darkness of the age of *jāhiliyyah*. Hence, they should try to value and honour this favour and not become a prey to the malicious conspiracies of the Jews.

Verses (5-8): A refutation of the claim of the Jews that they are the chosen *ummah* and no one except them can be blessed with the favour of prophethood. A reference is made to their unworthy attitudes which had deprived them of the Almighty’s guidance and also stripped them of the position of leadership they had held.

Verses (9-11): A group of Muslims have been rebuked on a wrong attitude they had adopted when once the Prophet (sws) was delivering the Friday address. Apparently, this might appear as a minor fault to them, but it points to a profound weakness in them: a group among them had not understood the basic reality that once a person enters the fold of Islam, he barters his life and wealth for the Almighty’s forgiveness and mercy. It is against the requisites of his faith that business and trade activities

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should make him indifferent to God and His Prophet (sws). This is like following the footsteps of the Jews – something which had been forbidden in the previous *sūrah*. The Jews had erred similarly in the matter of *sabt,* and the Almighty, as result, had severely cursed them for this attitude.

Text and Translation

Section I (Verses 1 - 8)

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِيْمِ

يُسَبِّحُ لِلّٰهِ مَا فِي السَّمٰوٰتِ وَمَا فِي الْاَرْضِ الْمَلِكِ الْقُدُّوْسِ الْعَزِيْزِ الْحَكِيْمِ ۝١ هُوَ الَّذِيْ بَعَثَ فِي الْاُمِّيّٖنَ رَسُوْلًا مِّنْهُمْ
يَتْلُوْا عَلَيْهِمْ اٰيٰتِهٖ وَيُزَكِّيْهِمْ وَيُعَلِّمُهُمُ الْكِتٰبَ وَالْحِكْمَةَ ۚ وَاِنْ كَانُوْا مِنْ قَبْلُ لَفِيْ ضَلٰلٍ مُّبِيْنٍ ۝٢ وَّاٰخَرِيْنَ مِنْهُمْ
لَمَّا يَلْحَقُوْا بِهِمْ ۭ وَهُوَ الْعَزِيْزُ الْحَكِيْمُ ۝٣ ذٰلِكَ فَضْلُ اللّٰهِ يُؤْتِيْهِ مَنْ يَّشَاۗءُ ۭ وَاللّٰهُ ذُو الْفَضْلِ الْعَظِيْمِ ۝٤ مَثَلُ الَّذِيْنَ
حُمِّلُوا التَّوْرٰىةَ ثُمَّ لَمْ يَحْمِلُوْهَا كَمَثَلِ الْحِمَارِ يَحْمِلُ اَسْفَارًا ۭ بِئْسَ مَثَلُ الْقَوْمِ الَّذِيْنَ كَذَّبُوْا بِاٰيٰتِ اللّٰهِ ۭ وَاللّٰهُ لَا
يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الظّٰلِمِيْنَ ۝٥ قُلْ يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ هَادُوْٓا اِنْ زَعَمْتُمْ اَنَّكُمْ اَوْلِيَاۗءُ لِلّٰهِ مِنْ دُوْنِ النَّاسِ فَتَمَنَّوُا الْمَوْتَ اِنْ
كُنْتُمْ صٰدِقِيْنَ ۝٦ وَلَا يَتَمَنَّوْنَهٗٓ اَبَدًۢا بِمَا قَدَّمَتْ اَيْدِيْهِمْ ۭ وَاللّٰهُ عَلِيْمٌۢ بِالظّٰلِمِيْنَ ۝٧ قُلْ اِنَّ الْمَوْتَ الَّذِيْ تَفِرُّوْنَ
مِنْهُ فَاِنَّهٗ مُلٰقِيْكُمْ ثُمَّ تُرَدُّوْنَ اِلٰى عٰلِمِ الْغَيْبِ وَالشَّهَادَةِ فَيُنَبِّئُكُمْ بِمَا كُنْتُمْ تَعْمَلُوْنَ ۝٨

In the name of God, the Most Gracious, the Ever Merciful.

All that is in the heavens and the earth glorifies God, the Sovereign Lord, the Flawless, the Almighty, the Wise. It is He who sent forth among the unlettered, a Messenger from among them, who recites to them His revelations and purifies them and instructs them in the Book and in wisdom; and, indeed, these people were in manifest error before this and from those among them also who have yet to be included among them. God is the Mighty, the Wise One. Such is the grace of God: He bestows it on who He intends to and great is His grace. (1-4)

The parable of those who were entrusted with the burden of the Torah and then did not bear it is like that of a donkey laden with books. What an evil parable is this of a people who denied God's revelations. And God does not guide the wrongdoers. Tell them: "O People who have become Jews! If you think that you are dearer to God than others, then you should wish for death, if you are truthful in your claim." And they will never be desirous of death because of the misdeeds they have done. And God knows well the wrongdoers. Tell them: "The death from which you are running away is sure to come to you. Then, you shall be made to appear before Him who knows the unknown and the manifest. Thus, He will inform you of all what you had been doing." (5-8)

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Explanation

يُسَبِّحُ لِلّٰهِ مَا فِي السَّمٰوٰتِ وَمَا فِي الْاَرْضِ الْمَلِكِ الْقُدُّوْسِ الْعَزِيْزِ الْحَكِيْمِ ۝[1]

This introductory verse also occurs in previous *sūrahs* with a slight change in words. In the previous *sūrah*, the past tense سَبَّحَ was used. Here the word يُسَبِّحُ is used which brings the portrayal before the eyes.

The verse mentions four attributes of God; all these attributes come as a preamble to the succeeding verse. It will be appropriate to explain them under the coming verse.

هُوَ الَّذِيْ بَعَثَ فِي الْاُمِّيّٖنَ رَسُوْلًا مِّنْهُمْ يَتْلُوْا عَلَيْهِمْ اٰيٰتِهٖ وَيُزَكِّيْهِمْ وَيُعَلِّمُهُمُ الْكِتٰبَ وَالْحِكْمَةَ ۚ وَاِنْ كَانُوْا مِنْ قَبْلُ لَفِيْ ضَلٰلٍ مُّبِيْنٍ ۝[2]

A reflection on this verse shows that in order to realize the attributes of God mentioned in the opening verse, the Messenger mentioned in this verse was sent forth.

God is the real sovereign. It is a requisite of this attribute that in order to inform His creation of His directives, He send forth to them a Messenger who recites before them His teachings and guidelines (يَتْلُوْا عَلَيْهِمْ اٰيٰتِهٖ).

He is pure and flawless, and for this reason He wanted to purify people through His Messenger and His teachings. Thus His Messenger is purifying the beliefs and deeds of people and is cleansing them of moral evils (يُزَكِّيْهِمْ).

Moreover, He is powerful and wise (الْعَزِيْزُ الْحَكِيْمُ), and thus has sent a Messenger who instructs people in الْكِتٰبَ (*al-kitāb*) and *al-hikmah* (الْحِكْمَةَ). The word *al-kitāb* here means the *sharī'ah* or the divine law. The *sharī'ah* can only be enforced by someone who is powerful and has authority. However, God is not merely powerful and dominant. He is also الْحَكِيْمُ (the wise). Thus, the law He is instructing His people in through His Messenger does not merely manifest through force and authority; it also reflects His wisdom and the welfare and well-being of His people not only in this world but also in the next.

This verse actually recounts and expresses a divine favour to the Ishmaelites, and for this reason the attribute "unlettered" is mentioned for them as a distinctive feature. I have already elaborated upon this word earlier in this exegesis; however, this much should remain evident as a reminder that though this term was actually coined specifically by the Jews among the People of the Book which reflected their religious arrogance as well as derision for the people of Arabia, yet since the Ishmaelites were

1. All that is in the heavens and the earth glorifies God, the Sovereign Lord, the Flawless, the Almighty, the Wise.

2. It is He who sent forth among the unlettered, a Messenger from among them who recites to them His revelations and purifies them and instructs them in the Book and in wisdom; and, indeed, these people were in manifest error before this.

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not conversant with divine law, they themselves adopted this term as a title without any inferiority complex. Then, when the Qur'ān used this word as a distinction for them and for the Messenger God sent forth to them, it was elevated to such a lofty status that it became a symbol of divinely ordained respect for them. As a result, a grand phenomenon was witnessed from providence: they, who were derided and disparaged were entrusted with the responsibility of instructing and guiding the whole world, and they who felt pride in being the recipient of a divine book and *sharī'ah* were compared to a donkey that is laden with books (كَمَثَلِ الْحِمَارِ يَحْمِلُ اَسْفَارًا).

Here, this word has been used to induce the people of Arabia to express gratitude: they should be thankful to their Lord that He has been bounteous to them. For their own reformation and instruction and to educate them in law and wisdom, He sent forth among them a person from among themselves, and took them out of the darkness of *jāhiliyyah* in which they had been hitherto engulfed because of their state of being unlettered. The implication is that they who have received this favour should value and honour it, and also try that others adopt this attitude as well. It should not be the case that they are deprived of it because of not honouring it, and in this way the objection of the envious is realized.

I have already explained in detail in Sūrah al-Baqarah the attributes of Muḥammad, the unlettered Prophet, mentioned in this verse. Readers are advised to look it up so that the misunderstandings which have been spread by the rejecters of Ḥadīth regarding the purpose of his advent are dispelled. Abraham (sws) had prayed to God to send forth a prophet among the Ishmaelites having exactly these attributes. This prayer is mentioned thus in Sūrah al-Baqarah:

رَبَّنَا وَ ابْعَثْ فِيْهِمْ رَسُوْلًا مِّنْهُمْ يَتْلُوْا عَلَيْهِمْ اٰيٰتِكَ وَ يُعَلِّمُهُمُ الْكِتٰبَ وَ الْحِكْمَةَ وَ يُزَكِّيْهِمْ ؕ اِنَّكَ اَنْتَ الْعَزِيْزُ الْحَكِيْمُ. (۱۲۹:۲)

Lord! Send forth to them a messenger from amongst them who shall read out to them Your revelations, and shall instruct them in the law and in wisdom, and shall purify them. You are indeed the Mighty, the Wise One. (2:129)

It is evident from this discussion that just as Muḥammad (sws) is a manifestation of the attributes of God, he is also a manifestation of the prayer of Abraham (sws) which he made to God regarding the Ismaelites. In other words, he is an amalgam of a variety of attributes. He is the realization of Jesus' prediction and the manifestation of Abraham's prayer. He is also a reflection of God's attributes and is also a human being from among the unlettered Arabs. He is no stranger or alien to them. Those who are belittling them cannot blame them that they received the light of guidance through them or through some other means; in fact, the Almighty has elevated them above all His creation and through them He has provided the radiance of guidance to the rest of

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the world.

Here, it should remain clear that though the Prophet (sws) was sent to the *ummiyyīn* (the unlettered) of Arabia, his message is for all mankind. I have already discussed this aspect in detail at an appropriate place in this *tafsīr*. It is enough to remember here that the Prophet (sws) was assigned two types of prophethoods: one specific and the other general. The former related to the Ishmaelites and the obligations of this prophethood were brought a completion by the Prophet (sws) himself. The latter related to all mankind, and in order to carry out this responsibility, the Almighty blessed his followers with the status of witnesses to the truth. His followers have been entrusted to fulfill this obligation till the Day of Judgement. Since the *ummiyyīn* stood as the vanguard of witnesses to the truth, it would not be wrong to say that it was through them that the Almighty showed the light of guidance to all mankind.

The words وَ اِنۡ كَانُوۡا مِنۡ قَبۡلُ لَفِیۡ ضَلٰلٍ مُّبِیۡنٍ are meant to stir up feelings of gratitude in the *ummiyyīn.* They had been engulfed in darkness of ignorance since a long time. In other words, the implication of these words is that if they consider this pitch darkness that had embraced them from all sides, they will have some realization of the favour and blessing of God – how He brought them out from this desolate darkness and bestowed great honour on them.

وَّاٰخَرِیۡنَ مِنۡهُمۡ لَمَّا یَلۡحَقُوۡا بِهِمۡ ؕ وَهُوَ الۡعَزِیۡزُ الۡحَکِیۡمُ ﴿۳﴾[3]

This verse is coordinated to the word اُمِّیّٖن (*ummiyyīn*) of the previous verse. The implication is that there are people who are yet to join the *ummiyyīn* to whom the Prophet (sws) is sent. This is a reference to those Ishamaelites who had yet to accept Islam. It is evident from this that in the previous verse though the word *ummiyyīn* is used in the general sense, it referred to only those Ishmaelites who had already embraced faith. Consequently, the last part of the previous verse: "indeed, these people were in manifest error before this," bears evidence to this inference.

Now, in this verse, those among the Ishmaelites who had yet to embrace faith are called in a very subtle and effective manner to do so. The word مِنۡهُمۡ (from among them) of this verse clearly indicates that among these *ummiyyīn* who are the recipient of this divine favour, there are others who are as yet averse to this call. Thus, in a very subtle and tactful manner they are urged to accept faith and not remain deprived of it, because it is for them that this favour has been sent and they are its foremost addressees.

Also concealed in the words لَمَّا یَلۡحَقُوۡا بِهِمۡ (yet to be included among them) are glad tidings that though at the moment these people have not joined the ranks of the believers, they soon will. In other words, these glad tidings of accepting faith in the

3. And from those among them also who have yet to be included among them. God is the Mighty, the Wise One.

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future are similar to the glad tidings in verse seven of Sūrah al-Mumtahinah – the *sūrah* preceding the previous one.

By the words وَهُوَ الْعَزِيْزُ الْحَكِيْمُ (God is the Mighty, the Wise One), God has referred to His practice and law which He adopts about providing the guidance of faith: if He wants, He can bless all mankind with guidance because He is Mighty; however, He is also wise; hence He blesses only those people with guidance who, according to His wisdom, are worthy of it. In Sūrah al-Dahr, this aspect is alluded to by the following words: وَمَا تَشَآءُوْنَ اِلَّآ اَنْ يَّشَآءَ اللّٰهُ ۭ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ كَانَ عَلِيْمًا حَكِيْمًا.يُّدْخِلُ مَنْ يَّشَآءُ فِيْ رَحْمَتِهٖ ۭ وَالظّٰلِمِيْنَ اَعَدَّ لَهُمْ عَذَابًا اَلِيْمًا (۷۶:۳۰-۳۱) (And you will not wish until God wishes. Indeed, God is all-knowing, wise. He admits into His mercy whomever He wishes. And for the wrongdoers, He has prepared a grievous punishment. (76:30-31))

ذٰلِكَ فَضْلُ اللّٰهِ يُؤْتِيْهِ مَنْ يَّشَآءُ ۭ وَاللّٰهُ ذُو الْفَضْلِ الْعَظِيْمِ ۝[4]

This is a reference to the great blessing the Almighty bestowed on the *ummiyyīn* and which has been referred to earlier. He chooses those people whom He desires, to be the recipients of His favour, and no one can have monopoly over His favour; all His desires are based on wisdom. No one else can interfere in this regard. The implication is that if the Jews are jealous of this favour, then, they should express this jealousy as much as they like; they will only harm their own selves and will not be able to harm anyone else. The Almighty has bestowed the *ummiyyīn* with something which belongs to Him, and not which belongs to someone else, that they should express anger.

مَثَلُ الَّذِيْنَ حُمِّلُوا التَّوْرٰىةَ ثُمَّ لَمْ يَحْمِلُوْهَا كَمَثَلِ الْحِمَارِ يَحْمِلُ اَسْفَارًا ۭ بِئْسَ مَثَلُ الْقَوْمِ الَّذِيْنَ كَذَّبُوْا بِاٰيٰتِ اللّٰهِ ۭ وَاللّٰهُ لَا يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الظّٰلِمِيْنَ ۝[5]

The arrogant claim of the Jews that only they can be the recipients of the *sharī'ah* and no other can rival them in this status is rebutted. Their example is that of a donkey who is carrying the burden of books but has no idea what is written in them.

The words حُمِّلُوا التَّوْرٰىةَ ثُمَّ لَمْ يَحْمِلُوْهَا signify that no doubt at one time they were entrusted with the burden of the Torah; however, this too is a reality that they never bore its burden. The words كَذَّبُوْا بِاٰيٰتِ اللّٰهِ explain what is meant by not bearing this burden: they did not continue to profess faith in the teachings and directives of the Torah. They denied them practically. Obviously, as a result of this denial, they were deprived of the reward they could have obtained by following them. The only thing that they did carry was their burden and sin, and they, in fact, became exemplars of the comparison

4. Such is the grace of God: He bestows it on who He intends to and great is His grace.

5. The parable of those who were entrusted with the burden of the Torah and then did not bear it is like that of a donkey laden with books. What an evil parable is this of a people who denied God's revelations. And God does not guide the wrongdoers.

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mentioned in this verse.

The word حُمِّلُوا is very subtle. It means that the Torah, in becoming whose recipients, they feel pride today, was not accepted by them with zeal and enthusiasm in the earlier times when it had been given to them; its burden was in fact imposed on them by force. The details of forcibly burdening them with it have been mentioned in Sūrah al-Baqarah. The manner in which the Jews displayed their arrogance and obduracy in accepting each and every directive of the Torah, and how sorrowfully and touchingly Moses (sws) expressed his grief on this attitude of theirs is also referred, albeit in a passing manner, in verse 5 of Sūrah al-Ṣaff.

The words بِئْسَ مَثَلُ الْقَوْمِ الَّذِيْنَ كَذَّبُوْا بِاٰيٰتِ اللّٰهِ refer to the fact that it is not befitting for people who are such bad examples, to regard themselves to be the chosen and near ones of God, and think that in their presence the Almighty will not entrust His *sharī'ah* to someone else.

As explained earlier, the words كَذَّبُوْا بِاٰيٰتِ اللّٰهِ explain what is meant by the statement of the Qur'ān made earlier that the Jews did not bear the burden of the Torah: they denied its directives by not following them. They do claim that they are its recipients; but if they do not follow it in practice, how can they be regarded as its trustees?

The exact words وَ اللّٰهُ لَا يَهْدِى الْقَوْمَ الظّٰلِمِيْنَ also occur in verse 7 of Sūrah al-Ṣaff. They allude to the fact that they have been cursed and condemned by God because of their misdeeds, and, as mentioned in Sūrah al-Baqarah, their hearts have been sealed by Him. Thus they will not be guided anymore. They themselves have wronged their souls. The Almighty was never unjust to them. They denied the Torah bestowed upon them, and now in their conceited claim of being its custodians, they are denying the last Messenger of God; they arrogantly ask why would God send such a messenger to some other race when they were present. It is in response to this attitude that the Qur'ān says in this verse that God does not guide such wrong-doers. Such people continue to lose their way in this manner.

قُلْ يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ هَادُوْٓا اِنْ زَعَمْتُمْ اَنَّكُمْ اَوْلِيَآءُ لِلّٰهِ مِنْ دُوْنِ النَّاسِ فَتَمَنَّوُا الْمَوْتَ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ صٰدِقِيْنَ ﴿۶﴾[6]

Another of the arrogant claims of the Jews is rebutted here: if they claim to be the dearest and nearest to God, then it is a requisite of being so that they have the enthusiasm and fervour of giving their lives for His cause. The lover is the most desirous of meeting his beloved. He does not evade what leads him to his beloved. However, as far as these Jews are concerned, no one can compete with them in their fear for death. Readers can take a look at the verses three and four of Sūrah al-Ṣaff in which this state of theirs is commented upon. In Sūrah al-Ḥashr, the cowardliness of the Banū Qurayẓah and their allies is portrayed in the following words:

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6. Tell them: "O People who have become Jews! If you think that you are dearer to God than others, then you should wish for death, if you are truthful in your claim."

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لَاَنْتُمْ اَشَدُّ رَهْبَةً فِيْ صُدُوْرِهِمْ مِّنَ اللّٰهِ ؕ ذٰلِكَ بِاَنَّهُمْ قَوْمٌ لَّا يَفْقَهُوْنَ. لَا يُقَاتِلُوْنَكُمْ جَمِيْعًا اِلَّا فِيْ قُرًى مُّحَصَّنَةٍ اَوْ مِنْ وَّرَآءِ جُدُرٍ ؕ بَاْسُهُمْ بَيْنَهُمْ شَدِيْدٌ ؕ تَحْسَبُهُمْ جَمِيْعًا وَّقُلُوْبُهُمْ شَتّٰى ؕ ذٰلِكَ بِاَنَّهُمْ قَوْمٌ لَّا يَعْقِلُوْنَ. (٥٩:١٣-١٤)

They fear you more than they fear God. This is because they are devoid of understanding. They will never have the courage to fight against you in an open field except in fortified cities and from behind walls. Great is their enmity with each other; you think of them as united, yet their hearts are divided. This is because they lack reason. (59:13-14)

In Sūrah al-Baqarah, this subject is discussed thus in relatively more detail:

قُلْ اِنْ كَانَتْ لَكُمُ الدَّارُ الْاٰخِرَةُ عِنْدَ اللّٰهِ خَالِصَةً مِّنْ دُوْنِ النَّاسِ فَتَمَنَّوُا الْمَوْتَ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ صٰدِقِيْنَ. وَلَنْ يَّتَمَنَّوْهُ اَبَدًا بِمَا قَدَّمَتْ اَيْدِيْهِمْ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ عَلِيْمٌۢ بِالظّٰلِمِيْنَ. وَلَتَجِدَنَّهُمْ اَحْرَصَ النَّاسِ عَلٰى حَيٰوةٍ ۛ وَمِنَ الَّذِيْنَ اَشْرَكُوْا ۛ يَوَدُّ اَحَدُهُمْ لَوْ يُعَمَّرُ اَلْفَ سَنَةٍ. (٢: ٩٤-٩٦)

Tell them: "If all the blessings of the Hereafter found with God are only for you alone leaving all others aside, then be desirous of death if you are true in this claim of yours." And they will never wish for death because of the misdeeds they have done and God is fully aware of these wrong-doers. And indeed, you will find them to be the greediest of all people for life – even more than the Idolaters. Each one of them would love to live a thousand years. (2:94-96)

Though the words مِّنْ دُوْنِ النَّاسِ of the verse are general; here, reference is particularly to the Ishmaelites. Because of the predictions of the Torah and because of racial jealousy, the Jews had special enmity with them. The details of this enmity are fully discussed in the exegesis of Sūrah al-Baqarah. This enmity began very earlier on when at the advent of the Prophet (sws) they realized that danger was looming over their heads and its fear increased their hostility.

Although the Jews could have stubbornly replied on what the Qur'ān has ridiculed them about by saying that they did not fear death, yet a person is fully aware of his inner-self. They felt that the Qur'ān had caught hold of a sore issue, and so they sought refuge in silence. How could they have refuted something to which their past history had testified and to which their present too was bearing evidence?

وَلَا يَتَمَنَّوْنَهٗۤ اَبَدًا بِمَا قَدَّمَتْ اَيْدِيْهِمْ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ عَلِيْمٌۢ بِالظّٰلِمِيْنَ ﴿٧﴾[7]

Mentioned in this verse is the reason of their cowardice; what has made them so

7. And they will never be desirous of death because of the misdeeds they have done. And God knows well the wrongdoers.

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fearful of death is their misdeeds: they have killed prophets of God, interpolated the Torah and have been dishonest in what they have been entrusted by God; they are also guilty of wiping out all the signs they were actually responsible for highlighting before people. With what face will they now appear before the Almighty? Nevertheless, they will have to go to Him one day, and He is fully aware of these wrong-doers. He will duly punish each one of them.

قُلْ اِنَّ الْمَوْتَ الَّذِیْ تَفِرُّوْنَ مِنْهُ فَاِنَّهٗ مُلٰقِیْكُمْ ثُمَّ تُرَدُّوْنَ اِلٰى عٰلِمِ الْغَیْبِ وَ الشَّهَادَةِ فَیُنَبِّئُكُمْ بِمَا كُنْتُمْ تَعْمَلُوْنَ ﴿۸﴾[8]

The warning concealed in the words وَ اللّٰهُ عَلِیْمٌۢ بِالظّٰلِمِیْنَ above is fully revealed in this verse: if they want to run away from death, they should try doing so – but where can they run? It will overtake them one day and then they will be presented before the Almighty with all their misdeeds. Each and everything they do is in His knowledge; He knows what is apparent and what is hidden. He will divulge all their misdeeds to them and they will have to undergo the punishment of each and every crime they had committed.

Section II (Verses 9-11)

In the succeeding verses, Muslims are rebuked on a fault committed by one of their groups on showing disrespect to the Friday prayer and the Prophet (sws). A trade caravan once entered Madīnah. When some people heard of this news, they left the mosque right at the time when the Prophet (sws) was delivering the Friday sermon and marched off towards it. Even though this act was perpetrated by some impolite elements, it shed light on some weaknesses of the whole Muslim community – weaknesses that needed to be reformed.

The first weakness that became evident from this incident was that many people were not fully cognizant of the great blessing of God which He bestowed on the unlettered Arabs by sending forth Prophet Muḥammad (sws) to them.

The second weakness that became clear from this incident was that many Muslims had not became fully conversant with the spirit of trading mentioned in verses 10 to 13 of Sūrah al-Ṣaff. As per this, people who had made a covenant of "to listen and to obey" with the Prophet (sws), had sold out their lives and wealth to God in return for His forgiveness and Paradise. It is not appropriate for them that they give so much importance to some other trading that they leave aside the Messenger of God delivering a sermon in the mosque and march away from him.

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8. Tell them: "The death from which you are running away is sure to come to you. Then you shall be made to appear before Him who knows the unknown and the manifest. Thus, He will inform you of all what you had been doing."

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The third weakness was that people had not fully realized the importance of Friday. This day is similar to what Saturday was to the Israelites. When they violated the sanctity of this day by showing greed for worldly pleasures, the Almighty cursed them for that and disfigured their faces. If Muslims, while following their footsteps violate the sanctity of Friday, there is no reason why they too will not have to face the wrath of God.

All these weaknesses were very grave and were actually instrumental in not giving due importance and value to the blessing God bestowed on the unlettered people of Arabia, much to the chagrin of the Jews. This blessing is mentioned very emphatically in this *sūrah*, and for this reason those who were guilty of this attitude were rebuked for it.

Readers can now study the subsequent verses with this background in mind.

يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْٓا اِذَا نُوْدِيَ لِلصَّلٰوةِ مِنْ يَّوْمِ الْجُمُعَةِ فَاسْعَوْا اِلٰى ذِكْرِ اللّٰهِ وَ ذَرُوا الْبَيْعَ ؕ ذٰلِكُمْ خَيْرٌ لَّكُمْ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُوْنَ ۝ فَاِذَا قُضِيَتِ الصَّلٰوةُ فَانْتَشِرُوْا فِي الْاَرْضِ وَ ابْتَغُوْا مِنْ فَضْلِ اللّٰهِ وَ اذْكُرُوا اللّٰهَ كَثِيْرًا لَّعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُوْنَ ۝ وَاِذَا رَاَوْا تِجَارَةً اَوْ لَهْوَا ِۨانْفَضُّوْٓا اِلَيْهَا وَ تَرَكُوْكَ قَآىِٕمًا ؕ قُلْ مَا عِنْدَ اللّٰهِ خَيْرٌ مِّنَ اللَّهْوِ وَ مِنَ التِّجَارَةِ ؕ وَ اللّٰهُ خَيْرُ الرّٰزِقِيْنَ ۝

Believers! When the call for the prayer is sounded on Friday, hasten to the remembrance of God and leave aside your trading. This is best for you, if you but knew it. Then, when the prayer ends, disperse in the land and seek God's bounty and remember God a lot so that you may prosper. Yet no sooner do the people see some trading or merriment, they flock eagerly to it, leaving you standing all alone. Tell them: "That which God has in store is far better than any merriment or any trade. And God is the most magnanimous provider." (9-11)

Explanation

يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْٓا اِذَا نُوْدِيَ لِلصَّلٰوةِ مِنْ يَّوْمِ الْجُمُعَةِ فَاسْعَوْا اِلٰى ذِكْرِ اللّٰهِ وَ ذَرُوا الْبَيْعَ ؕ ذٰلِكُمْ خَيْرٌ لَّكُمْ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُوْنَ ۝[9]

Though the address in this verse is general, it is directed at the people who have been rebuked for a weakness in character. The benefit of a general address is that the people who are actually addressed do not feel humiliated; in fact, if they are upright, they regard this overlooking of the speaker as his graciousness, and benefit from this advice. If people are pin-pointedly rebuked, there is a chance that feelings of stubbornness and overblown self-esteem arise in them.

The words لِلصَّلٰوةِ مِنْ يَّوْمِ الْجُمُعَةِ in صَلٰوةِ (prayer) are meant to explain so that it becomes evident that the prayer under discussion here is specifically the Friday prayer. It is solely the prayer which distinguishes this day from the rest.

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9. Believers! When the call for the prayer is sounded on Friday, hasten to the remembrance of God and leave aside your trading. This is best for you, if you but knew it.

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The call for the prayer (*ādhān*) mentioned here is obviously the one which is given before the Friday sermon. Narratives unanimously say that in the times of the Prophet (sws) and the first two caliphs, there was only one call for prayer which was given before the Friday sermon. The caliph 'Uthmān (rta) added one more call when in his times the population of Madīnah increased. This second call was given from his house in the market of Madīnah. So, even though this second call is an addition made by him, the whole of the *ummah* adopted it without any objection.

The word سَعْیٌ does not always mean "run about." In fact, this word is primarily used to do something with fervour and enthusiasm while being vigilant. When a slave hurries to answer the call of his master, this act is also termed as سَعْیٌ. This is precisely what is implied here in فَاسْعَوْا اِلٰی ذِکْرِ اللّٰہِ: when the call for the prayer is sounded, people should hasten to God's remembrance and leave aside trading activities.

The expression ذِکْرِ اللّٰہِ (remembering God) is a comprehensive term for both the prayer and the sermon. It is very obvious that the prayer is God's remembrance; the Qur'ān has called it so at various instances. As far as the sermon is concerned, it is, in fact, part of the Friday prayer. The Friday prayer is read in place of the *ẓuhr* prayer which has four *rak'āt*. On Friday, they are reduced to two, and the Friday sermon takes the place of the remaining two. This ذِکْرِ اللّٰہِ (remembering God) is done by the prayer leader while addressing the audience. Thus it can encompass everything which relates to the well-being and benefit of the Muslims which are a need of the hour. There is no reason to confine this remembrance to some specific supplications.

The word الْبَیْعَ primarily means "to sell." However, in its general usage, it is used for both sale and purchase. Thus when people were asked to leave aside الْبَیْعَ only, which is something that is more cherished, leaving aside purchase was required even more. The purpose is to ask Muslims to leave aside every kind of worldly activity and hasten towards the prayer. الْبَیْعَ is only mentioned because the incident which became a trial for the Muslims and on which they were warned related to trading and sale and purchase.

The implication of the sentence ذٰلِکُمْ خَیْرٌ لَّکُمْ اِنْ کُنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُوْنَ is that though this directive will apparently weigh down heavily on some of the Muslims and they will consider it to be a financial loss that they will accrue, yet as far as reality is concerned, it will earn them great blessings. Livelihood and sustenance are all in the hands of God. If to please Him, they bear some loss, they will only store a lot of reward for themselves in the everlasting life of the Hereafter, and it is possible that even in this world He creates circumstances in which they are compensated for this loss. The words اِنْ کُنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُوْنَ urge the addressees to judge their benefit or loss not keeping in view the limited life-span of theirs in this world; they should also keep in mind the Hereafter. However, the Hereafter is something which can only be understood if someone really wants to understand it.

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فَاِذَا قُضِيَتِ الصَّلٰوةُ فَانْتَشِرُوْا فِي الْاَرْضِ وَابْتَغُوْا مِنْ فَضْلِ اللّٰهِ وَاذْكُرُوا اللّٰهَ كَثِيْرًا لَّعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُوْنَ ﴿١٠﴾[10]

The implication of this verse is that if, for the pleasure of God, they are not able to abide by this restriction which is only till the Friday prayer, then it only means that they are lacking in faith. Here, it needs to be kept in consideration that the Jews were bound to abide by the restrictions of *sabt* for the whole day. However, for the Muslim *ummah*, restrictions are only from the call of the prayer to the completion of the prayer. They are free to do whatever they like during the rest of the day, just as they are for other days of the week.

The sentence informs Muslims that there is no restriction on them to struggle for their livelihood and for the sustenance of God. However, if in this struggle it is not merely the world that they are after and also want to gain the benefits of the next world, then they should remember God at every step. It is this remembrance which will save them from the deceptions and trials of Satan; if they show any slackness in this, Satan will entice them away to such an extent that they will lose the sense of what is lawful and what is not, and they will end up becoming the slaves to the lures of this world and the fuel of Hell shall, as a result, be their fate in the Hereafter.

وَاِذَا رَاَوْا تِجَارَةً اَوْ لَهْوًا انْفَضُّوْٓا اِلَيْهَا وَتَرَكُوْكَ قَآئِمًا ؕ قُلْ مَا عِنْدَ اللّٰهِ خَيْرٌ مِّنَ اللَّهْوِ وَمِنَ التِّجَارَةِ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ خَيْرُ الرّٰزِقِيْنَ ﴿١١﴾[11]

Here, at the end, the actual incident is mentioned which was the real cause of the teachings and warnings mentioned earlier. It is evident from some narratives[12] that a trade caravan entered Madīnah right at the time of the Friday sermon. As per tradition, its arrival was heralded by drums; as a result, some people hastened towards it leaving the Prophet (sws) delivering the sermon. Such caravans had a lot of importance in those days. Important merchandise was sold and purchased through them, and for this reason, people would anxiously wait for them. So, as soon as one of them arrived, people would try to outdo each other in purchasing things from them and in selling what they had for them. People who ran away from the Prophet (sws) in this situation were obviously not the ones who had been fully grounded in Islāmīc teachings; it is evident that they were also not fully aware of the importance of the Friday sermon; they thought that it was only the prayer that was important; they must have thought that they would return before the prayer would begin. However, their mistake afforded the opportunity of divine guidance being revealed for the *ummah* regarding Friday, the Friday prayer and the Prophet (sws) himself, which had not been revealed earlier.

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10. Then, when the prayer ends, disperse in the land and seek God's bounty and remember God a lot so that you may prosper.

11. Yet no sooner do the people see some trading or merriment, they flock eagerly to it, leaving you standing all alone. Tell them: "That which God has in store is far better than any merriment or any trade. And God is the most magnanimous provider."

12. See, for example: Ibn Kathir, *Tafsir al-Qur'ān al-'Aẓim*, vol. 4, 368.

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Though the direction of address of the verse is not specific, it is evident that the error it refers to emanated only from a few uncouth individuals. I have already referred to this earlier. The general style of the Qur'ān is that it does not rebuke people by pin-pointing them; it adopts a non-specific style in such admonitions so that every person can benefit from it, and no one in particular is humiliated.

The expression وَ تَرَكُوْكَ قَآىِٕمًا points to one aspect of the gravity of the incident: the sermon was being delivered by the Prophet (sws) himself. The disrespect and disregard which is obvious in this act is very significant. The Jews had adopted precisely the same attitude with Moses (sws). As a result, the Almighty distorted their hearts, as is mentioned in Sūrah al-Ṣaff. For this reason, these people have been taken to task by the Qur'ān at the very first stage.

The verse قُلْ مَا عِنْدَ اللّٰهِ خَيْرٌ مِّنَ اللَّهْوِ وَمِنَ التِّجَارَةِ ۭ وَاللّٰهُ خَيْرُ الرّٰزِقِيْنَ asks Muslims to be seekers of the great reward the Almighty has; it is far better than the merriment and trade activity of this world. If they earn the pleasure of God and His Prophet (sws) by incurring the greatest of worldly losses, then they will attain an eternal kingdom in lieu of the meagre possessions they have. On the other hand, if they earn all the treasures of this world by displeasing God and His Prophet (sws), then they should realize how long these riches will remain with them. Thus, prudence demands that they should not run after the riches of this world, and, instead, seek what God has in store for them. He is the best of sustainers, and provides sustenance from places a person cannot even imagine, and this sustenance is pure and wholesome in every respect.

I have already explained at some place in this exegesis the special linguistic styles found in the expressions: لَّعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُوْنَ and وَاللّٰهُ خَيْرُ الرّٰزِقِيْنَ.

Qur'ānic Guidance on the Friday Prayer, the Friday Sermon and the Status of Prophethood

Although I have explained the important inferences made during the explanation of the verses, following are some more which are worthy of attention.

Firstly, the style of the directives given in this *sūrah* regarding the Friday prayer, the call for this prayer (*ādhān*) and its sermon as well as the mistake on which they have been admonished shows that all the directives regarding the Friday prayer had been given by God even though there is no mention of this prayer anywhere else in the Qur'ān. It is evident from various narratives that this prayer was instituted in Madīnah by the Prophet (sws), and it was he who gave people the details of its rites and rituals. When people showed negligence in following these rites and rituals, they were admonished on this behaviour by the Qur'ān, as if they had violated the directives directly revealed by God in this regard. It is evident from this discussion that directives given by the Prophet (sws) are in fact given by God, whether they are mentioned in the Qur'ān or not. It is essential that the ascription of these directives be

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made to the Prophet (sws); once this ascription is verified, then rejecting them is like rejecting the directives of God.

Secondly, the Friday sermon is an important constituent of the Friday prayer. It is not permissible for any Muslim to show negligence and disregard to it. As indicated earlier, it is only because of this sermon that the *rak'āt* of this prayer have been reduced from four to two. The sermon has actually taken the place of the two reduced *rak'āt* and is divided into two parts just like the two *rak'āt.* Moreover, the Qur'ān has called it *dhikrullāh* (remembering of God), just as this term has been used for the prayer itself. In other words, the spirit of the sermon and the prayer is the same. The only difference is that in the prayer both the *imām* and his followers remember God while facing Him, and in the sermon, it is the *imām* who faces the people and reminds them of remembering God. It is strange that in these times the real Friday sermon has been confined to a few conventional supplications, and the *imāms* spend all their energies in the long speeches they deliver before the actual sermon. The speeches have little to do with remembering God and are generally replete with other irrelevant details. It is a real pity that the audience either dozes off or gets tired because of their unending duration.

Many people, in order to evade these lengthy speeches, come to the mosque at the time when the real sermon starts which in these times has become more of a routine. This is indeed a sorry state of affairs. It is essential that the importance of the real sermon be revived. The way to do this is that the *imāms,* instead of indulging in long speeches should spend time in reminding people of things that constitute the real sermon. This sermon should be brief, yet full of wisdom so that people show interest in it and benefit from it. People should be urged to come to hear this sermon at the right time, and should be informed of the fate mentioned in this *sūrah* that they could meet if they show negligence to this.

Thirdly, it is evident from the style of the Qur'ān that in the eyes of God the most desirable attitude for a Muslim is that the time before the Friday prayer should be spent in its preparation. He should not get involved in any activity that hampers this preparation in any manner, unless there is some severely compelling need. This inference is drawn from the words of the Qur'ān, which say that once the Friday prayer ends, people should spread out in the land and seek God's bounty. It is evident from these words that the appropriate time for trade and business activities on this day is not before the Friday prayer but after it – specially for activities in which people have to come out of their settlements and disperse in the land, and there is a strong chance that if these activities are begun before the prayer, then they might interfere with it or hinder it. A person should be provided with a day of the week in which he gets a hair-cut, washes his clothes and takes a bath. The most appropriate day for this could only have been Friday because all these activities are part of its etiquette. For this reason, the Almighty has directed Muslims that if they have to indulge in trade and business activities on this day, then they should begin after the prayer. Our worthy

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scholars of the past have conformed to this very routine, and this routine is liked even today in religious circles where people have an awareness of Islamic traditions and customs.

I have confined myself in the discussion above to what can be deduced directly from the Qur'ān regarding the Friday prayer. There are other issues regarding it which relate to *fiqh* that I have not touched upon.

With these lines, I come to the end of this *sūrah's* exegesis by God's help and guidance. فالحمد لله على إحسانه (gratitude to Him for His favour)

Lahore,
25th March 1978 AD
14th Rabī' al-Thānī 1398 AH

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Tadabbur i Qur’ān

Sūrah al-Munāfiqūn (63)

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Sūrah al-Munāfiqūn

Central Theme and relationship with the Preceding *Sūrah*

This *sūrah* is a supplement to Sūrah al-Jumu'ah, the previous *sūrah,* at the end of which the weakness found in certain people was unveiled. These people claimed to profess faith, yet were so occupied with their worldly benefits and business interests that if a trade caravan would arrive, they would run towards it, abandoning the Prophet (sws) while he would be delivering the Friday sermon. In this *sūrah*, the hypocrites are discussed. They are the ones who do not have the will and resolve to fulfill any requirement of faith; yet they want that they be regarded worthy in the eyes of the Prophet (sws). For this, they adopted a special tactic: they would repeatedly swear before the Prophet (sws) that they regard him as a Messenger of God. However, the *sūrah* mentions that God swears in response that they are liars. Their deeds bear witness that they neither believe in God nor in His Prophet (sws). They use their oaths as a shield, and hide their hypocrisy behind it. The love of wealth and life has led them to withdraw the step they had taken towards faith. For this reason, the Almighty has sealed their hearts, and they have now been deprived of the ability to understand and reflect.

Analysis of the Discourse

The sequence of meanings of the *sūrah* is very evident. The first section which consists of eight verses discusses the character of the hypocrites. Their real ailment is disclosed in these verses: they are infatuated with the love of this world.

The second section has only three verses. In it, Muslims are warned that the love of wealth and children should not take them away from the remembrance of God. If, today, they would not properly benefit from their wealth by spending it for the cause of God, they will regret it once their life ends and this regret will be of no use to them.

In other words, the first section points to the real reason for the hypocrisy, and the second emphatically urges Muslims to guard themselves from it.

Text and Translation

بِسۡمِ اللّٰہِ الرَّحۡمٰنِ الرَّحِیۡمِ

اِذَا جَآءَکَ الۡمُنٰفِقُوۡنَ قَالُوۡا نَشۡہَدُ اِنَّکَ لَرَسُوۡلُ اللّٰہِ ۘ وَ اللّٰہُ یَعۡلَمُ اِنَّکَ لَرَسُوۡلُہٗ ؕ وَ اللّٰہُ یَشۡہَدُ اِنَّ الۡمُنٰفِقِیۡنَ لَکٰذِبُوۡنَ ۚ﴿۱﴾
اِتَّخَذُوۡۤا اَیۡمَانَہُمۡ جُنَّۃً فَصَدُّوۡا عَنۡ سَبِیۡلِ اللّٰہِ ؕ اِنَّہُمۡ سَآءَ مَا کَانُوۡا یَعۡمَلُوۡنَ ﴿۲﴾ ذٰلِکَ بِاَنَّہُمۡ اٰمَنُوۡا ثُمَّ کَفَرُوۡا فَطُبِعَ عَلٰی قُلُوۡبِہِمۡ

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فَهُمْ لَا يَفْقَهُوْنَ ۝ وَاِذَا رَاَيْتَهُمْ تُعْجِبُكَ اَجْسَامُهُمْ ؕ وَاِنْ يَّقُوْلُوْا تَسْمَعْ لِقَوْلِهِمْ ؕ كَاَنَّهُمْ خُشُبٌ مُّسَنَّدَةٌ ؕ يَحْسَبُوْنَ كُلَّ صَيْحَةٍ
عَلَيْهِمْ ؕ هُمُ الْعَدُوُّ فَاحْذَرْهُمْ ؕ قٰتَلَهُمُ اللّٰهُ ۚ اَنّٰى يُؤْفَكُوْنَ ۝ وَاِذَا قِيْلَ لَهُمْ تَعَالَوْا يَسْتَغْفِرْ لَكُمْ رَسُوْلُ اللّٰهِ لَوَّوْا رُءُوْسَهُمْ وَ
رَاَيْتَهُمْ يَصُدُّوْنَ وَهُمْ مُّسْتَكْبِرُوْنَ ۝ سَوَآءٌ عَلَيْهِمْ اَسْتَغْفَرْتَ لَهُمْ اَمْ لَمْ تَسْتَغْفِرْ لَهُمْ ؕ لَنْ يَّغْفِرَ اللّٰهُ لَهُمْ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ لَا يَهْدِى
الْقَوْمَ الْفٰسِقِيْنَ ۝ هُمُ الَّذِيْنَ يَقُوْلُوْنَ لَا تُنْفِقُوْا عَلٰى مَنْ عِنْدَ رَسُوْلِ اللّٰهِ حَتّٰى يَنْفَضُّوْا ؕ وَلِلّٰهِ خَزَآئِنُ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ وَلٰكِنَّ
الْمُنٰفِقِيْنَ لَا يَفْقَهُوْنَ ۝ يَقُوْلُوْنَ لَئِنْ رَّجَعْنَاۤ اِلَى الْمَدِيْنَةِ لَيُخْرِجَنَّ الْاَعَزُّ مِنْهَا الْاَذَلَّ ؕ وَلِلّٰهِ الْعِزَّةُ وَلِرَسُوْلِهٖ وَلِلْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ وَ
لٰكِنَّ الْمُنٰفِقِيْنَ لَا يَعْلَمُوْنَ ۝ يٰۤاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا لَا تُلْهِكُمْ اَمْوَالُكُمْ وَلَاۤ اَوْلَادُكُمْ عَنْ ذِكْرِ اللّٰهِ ۚ وَمَنْ يَّفْعَلْ ذٰلِكَ فَاُولٰٓئِكَ هُمُ
الْخٰسِرُوْنَ ۝ وَاَنْفِقُوْا مِنْ مَّا رَزَقْنٰكُمْ مِّنْ قَبْلِ اَنْ يَّاْتِىَ اَحَدَكُمُ الْمَوْتُ فَيَقُوْلَ رَبِّ لَوْلَاۤ اَخَّرْتَنِىْۤ اِلٰۤى اَجَلٍ قَرِيْبٍ ۙ فَاَصَّدَّقَ وَاَكُنْ
مِّنَ الصّٰلِحِيْنَ ۝ وَلَنْ يُّؤَخِّرَ اللّٰهُ نَفْسًا اِذَا جَآءَ اَجَلُهَا ؕ وَاللّٰهُ خَبِيْرٌۢ بِمَا تَعْمَلُوْنَ ۝

In the name of God, the Most Gracious, the Ever Merciful.

When the hypocrites come to you, they say: "We bear witness that indeed you are God's Messenger." And God knows that you indeed are His Messenger, and God bears witness that these hypocrites are absolute liars. They use their oaths as a shield, and have withdrawn from the path of God. Indeed, very evil is what they do. This is because they first embraced faith and then renounced their faith; so, their hearts were sealed. Thus they became devoid of understanding. (1-3)

And when you see them, their bodily appearance pleases you, and when they speak, you listen to what they say. Yet, they are like beams of timber which are rested against a wall. They take every danger to be against them. They are the real enemies. So guard yourself against them. God destroy them! How they have lost their senses. (4)

And when they are told: "Come, God's Prophet will seek forgiveness for you," they turn their heads and you see them go away in arrogance. It is equal for them whether you seek forgiveness for them or not, God shall never forgive them. God does not guide the disobedient. (5-6)

It is they who say: "Do not spend on these people who follow God's Messenger so that they desert him." And to God belong the treasures of the heavens and the earth, but the hypocrites cannot understand. They say: "If we return to Madīnah, the dominant will soon drive out the absolutely weak." However, dominance belongs to God and to His Messenger and to the believers; yet these hypocrites do not know it. (7-8)

Believers! Let neither your riches nor your children make you indifferent to remembering God. And those who do this should remember that they will surely be the losers. And spend of what We have blessed you with, before death befalls any one of you and he longingly says: "Lord! Why did you not give me more respite that I would have spent in charity and would have become among the righteous?" And God never gives respite to a soul when its appointed time arrives. And whatever you do is in God's knowledge. (9-11)

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Explanation

اِذَا جَآءَكَ الْمُنٰفِقُوْنَ قَالُوْا نَشْهَدُ اِنَّكَ لَرَسُوْلُ اللّٰهِ ۘ وَاللّٰهُ يَعْلَمُ اِنَّكَ لَرَسُوْلُهٗ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ يَشْهَدُ اِنَّ الْمُنٰفِقِيْنَ لَكٰذِبُوْنَ ۚ﴿۱﴾[1]

The previous *sūrah* also refers to the hypocritical attitude of a group; however, what was said about them was said in a general manner without pin-pointing anyone. In this *sūrah*, the address is very direct and revealing, which means that the character of those hypocrites who had become so seasoned in their hypocrisy that there was no hope of their reformation is under discussion here. Thus it is about these people that the Prophet (sws) is addressed later in the *sūrah,* and told that even if he seeks forgiveness for them, the Almighty will not forgive them. At another instance (9:80), the words are that even if he seeks forgiveness for them seventy times, the Almighty has no intention of forgiving them.

I have already explained at other places of this exegsis that the words نَشْهَدُ and وَاللّٰهُ يَشْهَدُ signify an oath: the hypocrites would try to convince the Prophet (sws) through repeated oaths, that they were believers. The reason that they had to swear was that their continuous blunders had made them so untrustworthy that they themselves realized that unless they swore on oath on what they said, no one would believe them. A person, who is confident on what he does, never swears needlessly; however, he who is not confident in this regard, relies solely on his oath. For this reason, the person who swears a lot is called مَهِيْنٌ by the Qur'ān: (١٠:٦٨) وَلَا تُطِعْ كُلَّ حَلَّافٍ مَّهِيْنٍ. (and heed not every person who swears false oaths and who is despicable, (68:10)).

The sentence وَاللّٰهُ يَعْلَمُ اِنَّكَ لَرَسُوْلُهٗ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ يَشْهَدُ اِنَّ الْمُنٰفِقِيْنَ لَكٰذِبُوْنَ is extremely eloquent and very apt: as far as the prophethood of Muḥammad (sws) is concerned, it does not need their proof. God knows fully that he is His messenger; however, God bears witness that these hypocrites are totally lying.

اِتَّخَذُوْۤا اَيْمَانَهُمْ جُنَّةً فَصَدُّوْا عَنْ سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ ؕ اِنَّهُمْ سَآءَ مَا كَانُوْا يَعْمَلُوْنَ ﴿۲﴾[2]

In order to protect themselves from being checked by the Prophet (sws), these hypocrites use their oaths as shields; the purpose is that they continue to be considered sincere towards Islam, and the Prophet (sws) does not doubt them while they continue with their pranks and conspiracies against Islam. In Sūrah Mujādalah (verse 14), one of their conspiracies is referred to: they had deep ties of friendship with a people who had earned the wrath of God: the Jews. On the one hand, they had assured these Jews by swearing oaths that they were with them, and on the other, they had adopted

1. When the hypocrites come to you, they say: "We bear witness that indeed you are God's Messenger." And God knows that you indeed are His Messenger, and God bears witness that these hypocrites are absolute liars.

2. They use their oaths as a shield, and they have withdrawn from the path of God. Indeed, very evil is what they do.

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exactly the same policy with the Muslims. After that, this same verse also occurs there with a slight change in words:

اِتَّخَذُوْٓا اَيْمَانَهُمْ جُنَّةً فَصَدُّوْا عَنْ سَبِيْلِ اللّٰهِ فَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ مُّهِيْنٌ. (۵۸:۱۶)

They use their oaths as shield; thus they have withdrawn from the path of God. A humiliating punishment awaits them. (58:16)

In other words, what is said is that through these oaths, they claim to have protected themselves from both the Jews and the Muslims, and in this way they have withdrawn the step they had taken for the cause of God. The truth is that this refuge is very temporary; very soon they will have to face a humiliating punishment.

The word صَدٌّ is used both transitively and intransitively. Here, as per contextual indications, it is evident that it is used in the latter sense: they did take a step forward towards Islam but then withdrew from this path by seeking refuge with their oaths; they reckon that if only oaths are enough to falsely assure Muslims of their sincerity and to deceive them in this manner, why should they take more initiative and invite perils for themselves? The words اِنَّهُمْ سَآءَ مَا كَانُوْا يَعْمَلُوْنَ rebuke them: they think that they are being very wise and diplomatic; however, in the eyes of God, this is an absolutely foolish scheme which will lead them to doom.

ذٰلِكَ بِاَنَّهُمْ اٰمَنُوْا ثُمَّ كَفَرُوْا فَطُبِعَ عَلٰى قُلُوْبِهِمْ فَهُمْ لَا يَفْقَهُوْنَ ﴿۳﴾[3]

The reason that the Almighty has sealed their hearts and they can no longer act uprightly is stated: they resort to disbelief after professing faith. It is the law and practice of God that if people who are shown the light of Islam by Him, and value and honour this light, then He increases its glow. On the other hand, if they adopt a contrary attitude, and keep retracting, this light is confiscated from them and their hearts are also sealed. The consequence is that they are deprived of the ability of thinking in the right manner. The reasons because of which the hearts of the Jews were sealed have been mentioned in detail in Sūrah al-Baqarah. It might be worthwhile to look them up. It is about such people that Jesus (sws) had said: "even what they have with them is taken away." (Matthew: 13, 12)

وَاِذَا رَاَيْتَهُمْ تُعْجِبُكَ اَجْسَامُهُمْ ؕ وَاِنْ يَّقُوْلُوْا تَسْمَعْ لِقَوْلِهِمْ ؕ كَاَنَّهُمْ خُشُبٌ مُّسَنَّدَةٌ ؕ يَحْسَبُوْنَ كُلَّ صَيْحَةٍ عَلَيْهِمْ ؕ هُمُ الْعَدُوُّ فَاحْذَرْهُمْ ؕ قٰتَلَهُمُ اللّٰهُ ۚ اَنّٰى يُؤْفَكُوْنَ ﴿۴﴾[4]

3. This is because they first embraced faith and then renounced their faith; so their hearts were sealed. Thus, they became devoid of understanding.

4. And when you see them, their bodily appearance pleases you, and when they speak, you listen to what they say. Yet, they are like beams of timber which are rested against a wall.

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This is a graphic picture of these hypocrites. These brief sentences, one can see, portray them such that no aspect of their inner and outer personalities remains hidden. The first two sentences depict their outer personalities and the last two describe their inner ones. Later, the Prophet (sws) has been asked to beware of them, and simultaneously, pity is expressed at their state.

The sentence وَاِذَا رَاَيْتَهُمْ تُعْجِبُكَ اَجْسَامُهُمْ refers to the apparently attractive appearances. It needs to be understood that these hypocrites were affluent. In the first place, they had amassed riches through both lawful and unlawful means. In the second, they were extremely stingy. Except for their own comfort and luxury, they were not ready to spend even a penny on the religious and collective needs of the society. Their bodies and faces reflected their affluence. Their leader was the famous hypocrite: 'Abdullāh ibn Ubayy. Other members of his group were also very rich and prosperous.

The sentence وَاِنْ يَّقُوْلُوْا تَسْمَعْ لِقَوْلِهِمْ depicts their glibness. When they speak, they would speak so effectively in the support and defence of Islam that they would win the hearts of their addressees. These addressees would listen to them intently. Earlier in the *sūrah*, it has been mentioned that they assure God and His Prophet (sws) of their sincerity by their oaths and eloquent speech. It is mentioned in Sūrah Muḥammad that they expressed their vigour for *jihād*; but when they were actually asked to undertake it, they hid themselves. Since these hypocrites knew that the Prophet (sws) and the believers were aware of their cowardice, so, when they would come to the Prophet (sws), they would try to convince him through effective and moving words that they were earnest exponents of Islam and were ready to sacrifice everything for its cause. Though the Prophet (sws) was fully aware of their inner-selves, he would, out of graciousness, still listen to their conversation. This would be enough to satisfy them that their powerful and persuasive talks had done the job.

The words كَاَنَّهُمْ خُشُبٌ مُّسَنَّدَةٌ highlight their inner-selves: even though they have attractive appearances, their hearts are dead. In fact, their hearts have been sealed by the Almighty, as is mentioned in the previous verse. As a result of this spiritual death, their example in the gathering of the Prophet (sws) is as if they are hollow logs of timber which have been dressed up and made to rest against the walls.

The word صَيْحَةٌ literally means "a shout;" however, it is also used for danger, and here, it is used in this latter sense. The implication is that even though they wanted to assure the Prophet (sws) through their effective yet deceiving words that they were very brave and prepared to offer every sacrifice for the cause of Islam, yet they were great cowards. Wherever a danger appeared, because of their lack of courage, they would think they it was going to land on them. What could be expected of people who are so faintheartedwhen danger in reality will manifest itself?

They take every danger to be against them. They are the real enemies. So guard yourself against them. God destroy them! How they have lost their senses.

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The sentence هُمُ الْعَدُوُّ فَاحْذَرْهُمْ alludes to the fact that in order to prove their innocence they are trying to make others doubtful in the eyes of the Prophet (sws), yet they themselves are in fact the real enemies of Islam, and, as such, the Prophet (sws) should always beware of them. It needs to be kept in consideration that one of their tactics was that they would also blame innocent Muslims for many crimes they themselves would perpetrate so that the Prophet (sws) considers them to be innocent.

The words قٰتَلَهُمُ اللّٰهُ اَنّٰى يُؤْفَكُوْنَ chide them as well as express pity on them: may God destroy them; how misled are they that every step of theirs is in the wrong direction!

This character of these hypocrites is portrayed at many instances in the Qur'ān. For the sake of brevity, I am citing below just one instance from Sūrah al-Baqarah:

وَمِنَ النَّاسِ مَنْ يُّعْجِبُكَ قَوْلُهٗ فِي الْحَيٰوةِ الدُّنْيَا وَيُشْهِدُ اللّٰهَ عَلٰى مَا فِيْ قَلْبِهٖ ۙ وَهُوَ اَلَدُّ الْخِصَامِ. وَاِذَا تَوَلّٰى سَعٰى فِي الْاَرْضِ لِيُفْسِدَ فِيْهَا وَيُهْلِكَ الْحَرْثَ وَالنَّسْلَ ۭ وَاللّٰهُ لَا يُحِبُّ الْفَسَادَ. وَاِذَا قِيْلَ لَهُ اتَّقِ اللّٰهَ اَخَذَتْهُ الْعِزَّةُ بِالْاِثْمِ فَحَسْبُهٗ جَهَنَّمُ ۭ وَلَبِئْسَ الْمِهَادُ. (۲:۲۰۴-۲۰۶)

And there are some whose conversation regarding the life of this world does please you, and they even make God witness to what is in their hearts; whereas, in fact, they are the deadliest among the enemies. No sooner do they leave you, than they hasten to spread disorder in the land and ravish crops and destroy life, and God does not like disorder. And when they are asked: "Have fear of God," their arrogance leads them to sin. So, sufficient for them is Hell, and it is a very evil abode. (2:204-206)

وَاِذَا قِيْلَ لَهُمْ تَعَالَوْا يَسْتَغْفِرْ لَكُمْ رَسُوْلُ اللّٰهِ لَوَّوْا رُءُوْسَهُمْ وَرَاَيْتَهُمْ يَصُدُّوْنَ وَهُمْ مُّسْتَكْبِرُوْنَ ﴿۵﴾[5]

What is mentioned here is the same as what is stated in the previously cited verses of Sūrah al-Baqarah in the words: وَاِذَا قِيْلَ لَهُ اتَّقِ اللّٰهَ اَخَذَتْهُ الْعِزَّةُ بِالْاِثْمِ (and when they are asked: "have fear of God," their arrogance leads them to sin). What is described in the verse is what happens when they are called to the presence of the Prophet (sws) when their pranks and plots come to his notice.

The way their arrogant evasion is portrayed from their limbs is expressed by the words: لَوَّوْا رُءُوْسَهُمْ. This is a very eloquent expression. How this evasion affects the inner-self is stated by the words: يَصُدُّوْنَ وَهُمْ مُّسْتَكْبِرُوْنَ. In other words, both their inner and outer selves are highlighted. It needs to be kept in mind that people who do not have moral courage do not confess or condemn themselves even after their sins are revealed. They fear that if they confess once, they will lose their credibility forever. This weakness of theirs ties them up with sins. This aspect is referred to by the words:

5. And when they are told: "Come, God's prophet will seek forgiveness for you," they turn their heads and you see them go away in arrogance.

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اَخَذَتْهُ الْعِزَّةُ بِالْاِثْمِ of the Sūrah al-Baqarah verse cited earlier.

سَوَآءٌ عَلَيْهِمْ اَسْتَغْفَرْتَ لَهُمْ اَمْ لَمْ تَسْتَغْفِرْ لَهُمْ ؕ لَنْ يَّغْفِرَ اللّٰهُ لَهُمْ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ لَا يَهْدِى الْقَوْمَ الْفٰسِقِيْنَ ۝[6]

Stated here is the punishment of their arrogance. The Almighty has addressed the Prophet (sws) and communicated His verdict in this regard. He never blesses people who insist on disobedience with His guidance. He guides only those who are ashamed of their sins, and turn to the Prophet (sws). In Sūrah al-Nisā', this topic is discussed in the following words:

وَلَوْ اَنَّهُمْ اِذْ ظَّلَمُوْٓا اَنْفُسَهُمْ جَآءُوْكَ فَاسْتَغْفَرُوا اللّٰهَ وَاسْتَغْفَرَ لَهُمُ الرَّسُوْلُ لَوَجَدُوا اللّٰهَ تَوَّابًا رَّحِيْمًا. (٤:٦٤)

And if, when they wronged themselves had come to you to seek God's pardon, and if the Prophet had also sought forgiveness for them, they would have found God forgiving and merciful. (4:64)

About those who show arrogance before God and His Prophet (sws), the verdict declared in Sūrah al-Tawbah is:

اِسْتَغْفِرْ لَهُمْ اَوْ لَا تَسْتَغْفِرْ لَهُمْ ؕ اِنْ تَسْتَغْفِرْ لَهُمْ سَبْعِيْنَ مَرَّةً فَلَنْ يَّغْفِرَ اللّٰهُ لَهُمْ. (٩:٨٠)

It is the same whether or not you seek forgiveness for them. Even if you seek forgiveness for them seventy times, God will not forgive them. (9:80)

هُمُ الَّذِيْنَ يَقُوْلُوْنَ لَا تُنْفِقُوْا عَلٰى مَنْ عِنْدَ رَسُوْلِ اللّٰهِ حَتّٰى يَنْفَضُّوْا ؕ وَلِلّٰهِ خَزَآئِنُ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ وَلٰكِنَّ الْمُنٰفِقِيْنَ لَا يَفْقَهُوْنَ ۝[7]

The verse mentions the reason which has made them worthy of God's wrath: so angered is He of them, that He will not forgive them, even if His Messenger seeks His forgiveness seventy times.

It is mentioned in some narratives that a fight took place between a poor *muhājir* and an *anṣārī* at the spring at which the Prophet (sws) and his army had stopped over in Banī Muṣṭaliq in 6 AH. The *muhājir* slapped the *anṣārī* and both called for help from their respective tribesmen. Armed with swords, people from both tribes gathered. Though, with the blessing of God the matter was resolved, 'Abdullāh ibn Ubayy, who would always be on the lookout for such opportunities, uttered some malicious words which were meant to incite the *ansār* against the *muhājirūn*. He said: "In spite of seeking refuge in our house, they are showing enmity to us; whoever has

6. It is equal for them, whether you seek forgiveness for them or not, God shall never forgive them. God does not guide the disobedient.

7. It is they who say: "Do not spend on these people who follow God's Messenger so that they desert him." And to God belong the treasures of the heavens and the earth, but the Hypocrites cannot understand.

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said this has said the truth that if a person feeds a dog and it becomes strong, then it will bite that very person. By God! Now if we return, the noble will definitely turn out the wretched from there." To the *anṣār* who had gathered there, he said: "You are only enduring the consequence of your own fault. You invited them as guests to your homes and gave them a share of your wealth. By God! Had you desisted from helping them, they would have run away from here long ago."[8]

While referring to some of these words uttered by him, the verse says that how can God forgive such people whose hearts are filled with such hate and venom against Islam and Muslims!

The words وَلِلّٰهِ خَزَآئِنُ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ وَلٰكِنَّ الْمُنٰفِقِيْنَ لَا يَفْقَهُوْنَ are an answer to what 'Abdullāh ibn Ubayy had said: this hypocrite thinks that if he and his associates stop helping the *muhājirūn*, they will be left with no support; the fact is that all the treasures of the heavens and the earth are in the possession of God. He bestows them on whomsoever He desires and confiscates them from whomsoever He desires; however, since the hearts of these hypocrites have been sealed, they are unable to understand this reality.

يَقُوْلُوْنَ لَئِنْ رَّجَعْنَاۤ اِلَى الْمَدِيْنَةِ لَيُخْرِجَنَّ الْاَعَزُّ مِنْهَا الْاَذَلَّ ؕ وَلِلّٰهِ الْعِزَّةُ وَلِرَسُوْلِهٖ وَلِلْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ وَلٰكِنَّ الْمُنٰفِقِيْنَ لَا يَعْلَمُوْنَ ﴿۸﴾[9]

This is a reference to the second of the malicious sentences uttered by 'Abdullāh ibn Ubayy, as alluded to earlier. In order to provoke the *anṣār* against the *muhājirūn*, he had also said that as soon as they returned to Madīnah, the esteemed and honoured (ie the *anṣār*) should turn out the worthless (ie the *muhājirūn*). In other words, the proclamation he made was the same as what was the custom and practice of the Arabs in the times of *jāhiliyyah*: This land should only be ruled by the noble and by those who are in authority; this is their right. How can we tolerate that people, who have sought refuge with us, slap our own people?

The section وَلِلّٰهِ الْعِزَّةُ وَلِرَسُوْلِهٖ وَلِلْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ وَلٰكِنَّ الْمُنٰفِقِيْنَ لَا يَعْلَمُوْنَ answers this proclamation of the age of *jāhiliyyah*: nobility and esteem is for God, His messenger and the believers, and as per a divine practice of God, time has come for its realization; but these hypocrites know not. In Sūrah al-Mujādalah, this divine practice is mentioned in the following words:

اِنَّ الَّذِيْنَ يُحَآدُّوْنَ اللّٰهَ وَرَسُوْلَهٗۤ اُولٰٓئِكَ فِي الْاَذَلِّيْنَ. كَتَبَ اللّٰهُ لَاَغْلِبَنَّ اَنَا وَرُسُلِيْ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ قَوِيٌّ عَزِيْزٌ. (۵۸: ۲۰-۲۱)

Those who oppose God and His Messenger shall themselves be humiliated. God

8. For details, see: Abū al-Fadā' Ismā'īl ibn 'Umar ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-'Azīm* vol. 4, (Beirut: Dār al-fikr, 1401 AH), 371.

9. They say: "If we return to Madīnah, the dominant will soon drive out the absolutely weak." However, dominance belongs to God and to His Messenger and to the believers; yet these Hypocrites do not know it.

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has decreed: "I will indeed triumph, and My messengers." Indeed, powerful is God, the Mighty. (58:19-21)

يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا لَا تُلْهِكُمْ اَمْوَالُكُمْ وَلَآ اَوْلَادُكُمْ عَنْ ذِكْرِ اللّٰهِ ۚ وَمَنْ يَّفْعَلْ ذٰلِكَ فَاُولٰٓئِكَ هُمُ الْخٰسِرُوْنَ ﴿٩﴾[10]

Here at the end, Muslims are admonished not to follow the hypocrites. The love of wealth and children has made them indifferent to God; they have no resolve left in them to do something for the Hereafter. If, like them, the Muslims also end up forgetting God and the Hereafter while being inebriated with the love of wealth and children, then they should know that this is precisely what real failure and deprivation is. They, who forget God, forget their own fate and have been allured by Satan. In Sūrah al-Mujādalah, such hypocrites are referred to thus: اِسْتَحْوَذَ عَلَيْهِمُ الشَّيْطٰنُ فَاَنْسٰهُمْ ذِكْرَ اللّٰهِ ۭ اُولٰٓئِكَ حِزْبُ الشَّيْطٰنِ ۭ اَلَآ اِنَّ حِزْبَ الشَّيْطٰنِ هُمُ الْخٰسِرُوْنَ. (۱۹:۵۸) (Satan has overpowered them, and made them indifferent to God's remembrance; they are the faction of Satan; and listen carefully that it is Satan's faction which will surely be the losers. (58:19)

وَاَنْفِقُوْا مِنْ مَّا رَزَقْنٰكُمْ مِّنْ قَبْلِ اَنْ يَّاْتِيَ اَحَدَكُمُ الْمَوْتُ فَيَقُوْلَ رَبِّ لَوْلَآ اَخَّرْتَنِيْٓ اِلٰٓى اَجَلٍ قَرِيْبٍ ۙ فَاَصَّدَّقَ وَاَكُنْ مِّنَ الصّٰلِحِيْنَ ﴿١٠﴾[11]

The verse describes the way to constantly revive the remembrance of the Almighty, to protect oneself from the trials of wealth and children and to safeguard oneself from the onslaughts of hypocrisy. Every person should try, before his own death, to earn whatever he can for the Hereafter by spending for the cause of God from the wealth God has blessed him with. It should not be the case that he ends up yearning for more time of life when death stares him in the eyes so that he could have spent in charity and thereby be included among the righteous.

In Sūrah al-Tawbah, a special feature of the character of these hypocrites is mentioned: they would keep clenching their fists because of miserliness. When they were poor, they would express everywhere their desire to spend generously for the cause of God, if He makes them affluent. However, when the Almighty, with His grace, fulfilled their desire, they withdrew from this promise. As a punishment for this miserliness, the Almighty strengthened in them the roots of hypocrisy, and they were deprived of the opportunity to spend in charity and thereby be regarded among the righteous. The Qur'ānic words are:

وَمِنْهُمْ مَّنْ عٰهَدَ اللّٰهَ لَىِٕنْ اٰتٰىنَا مِنْ فَضْلِهٖ لَنَصَّدَّقَنَّ وَلَنَكُوْنَنَّ مِنَ الصّٰلِحِيْنَ. فَلَمَّآ اٰتٰىهُمْ مِّنْ فَضْلِهٖ بَخِلُوْا بِهٖ وَ

10. Believes! Let neither your riches nor your children make you indifferent to remembering God. And those who do this should remember that they will surely be the losers.

11. And spend of what We have blessed you with, before death befalls any one you and he longingly says: "Lord! Why did you not give me more respite, that I would have spent in charity and would have become among the righteous."

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تَوَلَّوْا وَّهُمْ مُّعْرِضُوْنَ. فَاَعْقَبَهُمْ نِفَاقًا فِيْ قُلُوْبِهِمْ. (٩:٧٥-٧٧)

And there are those among them who promised themselves, saying: "If God is bountiful to us, we will generously spend in charity and live like the righteous." So, when God bestowed His blessing on them, they became stingy and turned away by being unmindful. So as a punishment, God bolstered hypocrisy in their hearts. (9:75-77)

It has been explained in the exegesis of Sūrah al-Ḥadīd that those who desist in this world from spending in charity not only become distinct from the righteous among believers by being incriminated with hypocrisy, they will also have to face its consequences in the Hereafter by being made to yearn for what they did not do. God will raise men and women who spend in charity in this world among the righteous in the next world, which will include the truthful and the witnesses to the truth and a light will accompany them and lead them to Paradise. The hypocrite men and women will receive no share from this light. A wall shall obstruct the righteous from them. It will be explained to them there that the condition for being regarded among the righteous was spending for the cause of God, from which they desisted in the previous world.

In this verse, the word وَاَكُنْ is in the form of an indefinite vowel less (*mudāri sākin*) verb and is apparently co-ordinated to فَاَصَّدَّقَ which itself is in the accusative. However, in my opinion, the expression وَاَكُنْ مِّنَ الصّٰلِحِيْنَ is the answer to a suppressed condition. If this suppression is revealed, then the discourse would be something to the effect: "If I had spent in charity, I would have been among the righteous." Since the textual indication of this condition in the form of فَاَصَّدَّقَ is evident, it is suppressed.

وَلَنْ يُّؤَخِّرَ اللّٰهُ نَفْسًا اِذَا جَآءَ اَجَلُهَا ؕ وَاللّٰهُ خَبِيْرٌۢ بِمَا تَعْمَلُوْنَ ﴿١١﴾[12]

This yearning will remain a yearning when the time of death will arrive. It will be of no use. Once the respite of life given by God expires, He does not extend it. He also knows that this yearning for spending in charity if they are given respite is absolutely baseless: even if they are granted more time, they will do what they always had being doing

With the grace of God, I come to the end of the exegesis of this *sūrah* with these lines. فللّٰه الحمد وله المنة (for God alone is all gratitude and from alone are all favours).

Lahore,
30th March 1978 AD
19th Rabī' al-Thānī 1398 AH

12. And God never gives respite to a soul when its appointed time arrives. And whatever you do is in God's knowledge.

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Tadabbur i Qur’ān

Sūrah al-Taghābun (64)

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Sūrah al-Taghābun

Central Theme and Relationship with the Preceding *Sūrah*

The previous *sūrah* ended on the warning that the love of wealth and children should not make people indifferent to the remembrance and rights of God; they should make use of the blessings and provisions bestowed on them by Him to earn for the Hereafter; otherwise, when the time of death arrives, people will express the yearning to be given more respite so that they can spend their wealth in the way of God and earn some reward for it; however, this yearning will remain a yearning. What has happened has happened; the past never comes back. In this *sūrah*, the same subject is the central theme, and it is explained that this worldly life is not all that there is; the real life is the life of the Hereafter, which is bound to come; it is in that life that the decision of success or failure in the previous life will be known. Therefore, it is mandatory upon one who has the resolve to achieve the great success of the Hereafter, to be prepared for every sacrifice to please God and His Prophet (sws). In this matter, he should disregard the rebukes of any one who rebukes and the preaching of any preacher. At times, a person's wife and children become a hindrance in this way, and their love weakens the resolve of many. It is essential for one who wants to keep his faith intact, to regard such a wife and children to be a trial, and protect himself from them; however, he must be forgiving towards them.

Analysis of the Discourse

Verses (1-4): The Almighty has not created man in this world without a purpose. The great effort undertaken by the Almighty in His creation to sustain and nourish him bears witness that the Day of Reckoning has an appointed time. God, the Lord and Creator of this world, is well aware of every person's words and deeds. He shall treat each person according to what he deserves.

Verses (5-7): By citing historical evidence, it is shown that nations which denied the warnings of their respective prophets about the Hereafter and vainly rejected their sound arguments on the pretext that accepting a human being as a prophet (sws) is an insult to them, were all destroyed by God. They met a dreadful fate in this very world, and in the Hereafter also they shall encounter a grievous punishment.

Verses (8-10): People are invited to profess faith in God, His Prophet (sws) and the Qur'ān. They are urged to prepare for the Day which will decide the victor and the vanquished. On that day, the Almighty will grant people of faith and the righteous the

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eternal reward of paradise, while He will cast those who adhered to disbelief in the eternal torment of Hell.

Verses (11-13): It is asserted that troubles and hardships which a person has to face in his life come with the permission of God. It is not befitting for the believers to become apprehensive because of them and turn away from the obedience of God and His Prophet (sws). It is the requirement of their faith that they should have trust in the Almighty: He will certainly help them. If they try to evade God and the Prophet (sws) by being overawed by their hardships, they shall bear its dire consequences. The responsibility of the Prophet (sws) was only to communicate the truth, which he has done; it is now their responsibility to abide by it.

Verses (14-15): Muslims are warned that at times the family becomes a great test of faith. Love for family members sometimes negatively affects the determination to fulfill religious obligations. It is thus essential for a person that their love or their desires should not restrain him in the cause of religion. However, he should adopt the attitude of "to forego and forget" in their regard.

Verses (16-18): People are invited to obey God and His Prophet (sws) as much as they can, and urged to generously spend for the cause of religion. Glad tidings are given of eternal success to those who protect themselves from the malady of miserliness. God will greatly honour those who will lend Him their wealth. It shall be returned to them multiplied many times; He shall also forgive them. He has knowledge of both the seen and the unseen: He is fully aware of all virtuous deeds, however secretly they might have been done.

Text and Translation

بِسۡمِ اللّٰہِ الرَّحۡمٰنِ الرَّحِیۡمِ

یُسَبِّحُ لِلّٰہِ مَا فِی السَّمٰوٰتِ وَ مَا فِی الۡاَرۡضِ ۚ لَہُ الۡمُلۡکُ وَ لَہُ الۡحَمۡدُ ۫ وَ ہُوَ عَلٰی کُلِّ شَیۡءٍ قَدِیۡرٌ ﴿۱﴾ ہُوَ الَّذِیۡ خَلَقَکُمۡ فَمِنۡکُمۡ
کَافِرٌ وَّ مِنۡکُمۡ مُّؤۡمِنٌ ؕ وَ اللّٰہُ بِمَا تَعۡمَلُوۡنَ بَصِیۡرٌ ﴿۲﴾ خَلَقَ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَ الۡاَرۡضَ بِالۡحَقِّ وَ صَوَّرَکُمۡ فَاَحۡسَنَ صُوَرَکُمۡ ۚ وَ اِلَیۡہِ
الۡمَصِیۡرُ ﴿۳﴾ یَعۡلَمُ مَا فِی السَّمٰوٰتِ وَ الۡاَرۡضِ وَ یَعۡلَمُ مَا تُسِرُّوۡنَ وَ مَا تُعۡلِنُوۡنَ ؕ وَ اللّٰہُ عَلِیۡمٌۢ بِذَاتِ الصُّدُوۡرِ ﴿۴﴾ اَلَمۡ یَاۡتِکُمۡ
نَبَؤُا الَّذِیۡنَ کَفَرُوۡا مِنۡ قَبۡلُ ۫ فَذَاقُوۡا وَبَالَ اَمۡرِہِمۡ وَ لَہُمۡ عَذَابٌ اَلِیۡمٌ ﴿۵﴾ ذٰلِکَ بِاَنَّہٗ کَانَتۡ تَّاۡتِیۡہِمۡ رُسُلُہُمۡ بِالۡبَیِّنٰتِ
فَقَالُوۡۤا اَبَشَرٌ یَّہۡدُوۡنَنَا ۫ فَکَفَرُوۡا وَ تَوَلَّوۡا وَّ اسۡتَغۡنَی اللّٰہُ ؕ وَ اللّٰہُ غَنِیٌّ حَمِیۡدٌ ﴿۶﴾ زَعَمَ الَّذِیۡنَ کَفَرُوۡۤا اَنۡ لَّنۡ یُّبۡعَثُوۡا ؕ قُلۡ بَلٰی
وَ رَبِّیۡ لَتُبۡعَثُنَّ ثُمَّ لَتُنَبَّؤُنَّ بِمَا عَمِلۡتُمۡ ؕ وَ ذٰلِکَ عَلَی اللّٰہِ یَسِیۡرٌ ﴿۷﴾ فَاٰمِنُوۡا بِاللّٰہِ وَ رَسُوۡلِہٖ وَ النُّوۡرِ الَّذِیۡۤ اَنۡزَلۡنَا ؕ وَ اللّٰہُ بِمَا
تَعۡمَلُوۡنَ خَبِیۡرٌ ﴿۸﴾ یَوۡمَ یَجۡمَعُکُمۡ لِیَوۡمِ الۡجَمۡعِ ذٰلِکَ یَوۡمُ التَّغَابُنِ ؕ وَ مَنۡ یُّؤۡمِنۡۢ بِاللّٰہِ وَ یَعۡمَلۡ صَالِحًا یُّکَفِّرۡ عَنۡہُ سَیِّاٰتِہٖ وَ
یُدۡخِلۡہُ جَنّٰتٍ تَجۡرِیۡ مِنۡ تَحۡتِہَا الۡاَنۡہٰرُ خٰلِدِیۡنَ فِیۡہَاۤ اَبَدًا ؕ ذٰلِکَ الۡفَوۡزُ الۡعَظِیۡمُ ﴿۹﴾ وَ الَّذِیۡنَ کَفَرُوۡا وَ کَذَّبُوۡا بِاٰیٰتِنَاۤ
اُولٰٓئِکَ اَصۡحٰبُ النَّارِ خٰلِدِیۡنَ فِیۡہَا ؕ وَ بِئۡسَ الۡمَصِیۡرُ ﴿۱۰﴾ مَاۤ اَصَابَ مِنۡ مُّصِیۡبَۃٍ اِلَّا بِاِذۡنِ اللّٰہِ ؕ وَ مَنۡ یُّؤۡمِنۡۢ بِاللّٰہِ یَہۡدِ

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قَلْبَهٗ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ بِكُلِّ شَیْءٍ عَلِیْمٌ ﴿۱۱﴾ وَاَطِیْعُوا اللّٰهَ وَاَطِیْعُوا الرَّسُوْلَ ۚ فَاِنْ تَوَلَّیْتُمْ فَاِنَّمَا عَلٰی رَسُوْلِنَا الْبَلٰغُ الْمُبِیْنُ ﴿۱۲﴾
اَللّٰهُ لَاۤ اِلٰهَ اِلَّا هُوَ ؕ وَعَلَی اللّٰهِ فَلْیَتَوَكَّلِ الْمُؤْمِنُوْنَ ﴿۱۳﴾ یٰۤاَیُّهَا الَّذِیْنَ اٰمَنُوْۤا اِنَّ مِنْ اَزْوَاجِكُمْ وَاَوْلَادِكُمْ عَدُوًّا لَّكُمْ
فَاحْذَرُوْهُمْ ۚ وَاِنْ تَعْفُوْا وَتَصْفَحُوْا وَتَغْفِرُوْا فَاِنَّ اللّٰهَ غَفُوْرٌ رَّحِیْمٌ ﴿۱۴﴾ اِنَّمَاۤ اَمْوَالُكُمْ وَاَوْلَادُكُمْ فِتْنَةٌ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ عِنْدَهٗۤ اَجْرٌ
عَظِیْمٌ ﴿۱۵﴾ فَاتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ مَا اسْتَطَعْتُمْ وَاسْمَعُوْا وَاَطِیْعُوْا وَاَنْفِقُوْا خَیْرًا لِّاَنْفُسِكُمْ ؕ وَمَنْ یُّوْقَ شُحَّ نَفْسِهٖ فَاُولٰٓئِكَ هُمُ
الْمُفْلِحُوْنَ ﴿۱۶﴾ اِنْ تُقْرِضُوا اللّٰهَ قَرْضًا حَسَنًا یُّضٰعِفْهُ لَكُمْ وَیَغْفِرْ لَكُمْ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ شَكُوْرٌ حَلِیْمٌ ﴿۱۷﴾ عٰلِمُ الْغَیْبِ وَالشَّهَادَةِ
الْعَزِیْزُ الْحَكِیْمُ ﴿۱۸﴾

In the name of God, the Most Gracious, the Ever Merciful.

All that is in the heavens and the earth glorifies God alone. His only is the sovereignty, and to Him is due our gratitude, and He has power over all things. (1)

It was He Who created you: so, some of you are disbelievers, while others are believers. And God is aware of all that you do. He created the heavens and the earth with a purpose, and fashioned you; so, fashioned you well. And to Him is the return. He knows what is in the heavens and the earth and He knows what you conceal and what you reveal. And God is aware of the secrets of the hearts. (2-4)

Have you not heard of those who disbelieved before you? So, they tasted the fruit of their deeds, and for them is a grievous punishment. This is because their prophets continued to come to them with veritable signs; so, they said to them: "Will mortals guide us?" Thus they disbelieved and turned away, and God became indifferent to them and God is self-sufficient and glorious. (5-6)

The disbelievers claim they shall never be raised to life after death. Tell [them:] "Yes, by my Lord, you shall certainly be raised to life! Then you shall be told what you would have done." And this is very easy for God. So, believe then in God and in His Prophet and in the light that We have revealed. And God has knowledge of all what you are doing. (7-8)

Remember the day when, for the day of assembly, God will gather you. That shall, in fact, be the day of winning and losing. And those who believed and did righteous deeds shall be forgiven by God, and He will admit them to gardens watered by running streams. They will abide there forever. Supreme success, in fact, is this. And those, who disbelieved and denied Our revelations, it is they who shall be the inmates of the Fire. They shall abide in it forever. And this will be a very evil abode. (9-10)

No misfortune befalls except by God's permission. And he, who believes in God, God guides his heart and God has knowledge of all things. And obey God and obey the Prophet. Thus, if you pay no heed, Our Prophet's responsibility is only of clear communication. God alone is worthy of worship; there is no one worthy of worship except Him, and in God should the believers put their trust. (11-13)

Believers! Some among your wives and children are your enemies; so beware of them. And if you forgive them, overlook their blemishes and pardon them, then God is

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forgiving and merciful. Your wealth and your children are a trial for you, and with God lies great reward. So, keep fearing God as much as you can and listen and show obedience, and spend for your own good. Those, who were protected from the malady of their soul's greed will surely attain salvation. If you lend a generous loan to God, He will pay you back manifold and will forgive you. And God is the Most Appreciative, the Most Forbearing. He has knowledge of the unknown and the manifest. He is the Mighty, the Wise One. (14-18)

Explanation

يُسَبِّحُ لِلّٰهِ مَا فِي السَّمٰوٰتِ وَمَا فِي الْاَرْضِ ۚ لَهُ الْمُلْكُ وَلَهُ الْحَمْدُ ۡ وَهُوَ عَلٰى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيْرٌ ۝١[1]

This verse also occurs in previous *sūrahs* with a slight change in words, and I have already explained its various aspects at their respective places. Here the verse states that everything in the heavens and the earth glorifies God and by this glorification teaches man that God alone is the sovereign of this world, and to Him alone should we show our gratitude. Neither is anyone a partner in His sovereignty, nor does anyone else deserve the gratitude of His servants.

The words وَهُوَ عَلٰى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيْرٌ refer to the fact that it is absolutely clear that He has power over all things. He is not dependent on anyone to fulfill any of His tasks however great they may be. For this reason, associating someone with Him is an absolutely meaningless thing. He neither sought help from anyone in creating this world nor is He dependent on anyone in running its affairs. He has accomplished everything on His own, and just as He did this in the past, He will continue to do it in the future as well. Thus sufficient is He to be trusted alone by His servants. They must put their trust in Him, and not associate anyone else with Him in serving Him.

هُوَ الَّذِيْ خَلَقَكُمْ فَمِنْكُمْ كَافِرٌ وَّمِنْكُمْ مُّؤْمِنٌ ۭ وَاللّٰهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُوْنَ بَصِيْرٌ ۝٢[2]

The God, who is glorified by every object of this world, also created man; it is thus only befitting that he too glorify Him who is glorified by all the stars of the heavens, all birds that fly about and every tree and stone of this earth; however, since the Almighty has blessed man with the freedom to exercise his will, some among them as a result have become disbelievers and others believers. Thus, God is observing their deeds, and will deal with everyone according to the nature of these deeds. If He does not do this, it will only mean that belief and disbelief are equal in status in His eyes. This obviously is against His justice and wisdom.

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1. All that is in the heavens and the earth glorifies God alone. His only is the sovereignty, and to Him all gratitude is due and He has power over all things.

2. It was He Who created you: so, some of you are disbelievers, while others are believers. And God is aware of all that you do.

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خَلَقَ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضَ بِالْحَقِّ وَصَوَّرَكُمْ فَاَحْسَنَ صُوَرَكُمْ ۚ وَاِلَيْهِ الْمَصِيْرُ ۝[3]

This verse substantiates what has been stated earlier: the Almighty has created this world with a true purpose; it is the requisite of this true purpose that a day come on which the upholders of truth be rewarded for their attitude towards the truth, and those who spent their lives against this true purpose be punished.

The words وَصَوَّرَكُمْ فَاَحْسَنَ صُوَرَكُمْ point to the elaborate arrangement made by the Almighty in creating man. Everyone can see that man has been created in the best of moulds. Thus, the words used in Sūrah al-Tīn are: لَقَدْ خَلَقْنَا الْاِنْسَانَ فِيْٓ اَحْسَنِ تَقْوِيْمٍ. (٩٥:٤) (We have created man in the finest of moulds, (95:4)). The way man's inner and outer-self has been fashioned, and the way abilities and potentials are ingrained in him by the Almighty, clearly show that the real purpose of all creations of God is a human being. He stands at the pinnacle and the summit of all other creatures, which have been created to serve him directly or indirectly.

This elaborate arrangement in the creation of man who is equipped with such grand abilities, relating both to his inner and to his outer-self show that God has not created him without a purpose: his life will not end after enjoying the pleasures of this world. If this is to happen, then all this elaborate arrangement providence has made in his creation and in sustaining him will be rendered meaningless. Consequently, on this basis, the Almighty has reminded him of a great reality: the way the Almighty has generously provided for his upbringing, the way He has nourished and nurtured him and the way He has elevated him above all other creatures by creating him in the best of forms requires that one day man come to the presence of God and be questioned on the favours bestowed upon him by Him:

اَللّٰهُ الَّذِيْ جَعَلَ لَكُمُ الْاَرْضَ قَرَارًا وَّالسَّمَآءَ بِنَآءً وَّصَوَّرَكُمْ فَاَحْسَنَ صُوَرَكُمْ وَرَزَقَكُمْ مِّنَ الطَّيِّبٰتِ. (٤٠:٦٤)

It is God who has made the earth a dwelling-place for you, and the sky a roof. He fashioned you and fashioned you well and blessed you with wholesome things for sustenance. (40:64)

In other words, fashioning man in the best of forms, provision of apt sustenance and his high status among other creatures, require that he be held accountable before his Lord.

On these grounds, people who are not convinced of the Hereafter and the reward and punishment which is going to take place in it are threatened thus:

يٰٓاَيُّهَا الْاِنْسَانُ مَا غَرَّكَ بِرَبِّكَ الْكَرِيْمِ. الَّذِيْ خَلَقَكَ فَسَوّٰكَ فَعَدَلَكَ. فِيْٓ اَيِّ صُوْرَةٍ مَّا شَآءَ رَكَّبَكَ. (٨٢:٦-٨)

3. He created the heavens and the earth with a purpose, and fashioned you; so fashioned you well. And to Him is the return.

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O Man! What is it that has deceived you about your Beneficent Lord, Who made your sketch, then perfected you and gave you due proportion. He put you together in whatever shape He pleased. (82:6-8)

This verse explains the elaborate arrangement made by God in the creation of man, and it simultaneously also refers in a threatening tone to the responsibility that as a result, is imposed on him.

The words وَاِلَيْهِ الْمَصِيْرُ allude to the fact that the God who has created this world with a great purpose and has created man in such a diligent and elaborate manner, shows that he shall necessarily be returned to God one day to be rewarded or punished. If this does not happen, it would mean that all this elaborate arrangement is meaningless.

يَعْلَمُ مَا فِي السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ وَيَعْلَمُ مَا تُسِرُّوْنَ وَمَا تُعْلِنُوْنَ ۭ وَاللّٰهُ عَلِيْمٌۢ بِذَاتِ الصُّدُوْرِ ۝[4]

The verse urges a person not to remain in any doubt about the fact that God is aware of all that is happening openly or secretly in this world and that this information will become a source of accountability for man who will then be rewarded or punished accordingly by Him.

اَلَمْ يَاْتِكُمْ نَبَؤُا الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا مِنْ قَبْلُ ۡ فَذَاقُوْا وَبَالَ اَمْرِهِمْ وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ اَلِيْمٌ ۝[5]

The verse explains that previous nations who committed disbelief were made to taste a bitter punishment in this world, and in the Hereafter too, a grievous punishment lies in store for them. This is a reference to the nations of 'Ād and Thamūd and to the people of Lot (sws), whose accounts have also been related in detail in the previous *sūrahs;* the Quryash were aware of them as well. In fact, they even had the chance of passing by the ruined settlements of some of these nations. By referring to the history of these nations, the Qur'ān has informed us that the Almighty is not unconcerned with the good and evil perpetrated in this world; on the contrary, He continuously sent His messengers, and when people denied these messengers, they were severely punished by Him. The implication of the verse is that when the Quraysh are able to witness these examples of the Almighty's law of retribution before their own eyes, why should they regard as improbable that the Almighty will bring forth a day on which He administers justice to the whole world and His justice and mercy manifest on that day in every sense of the word.

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4. He knows what is in the heavens and the earth and He knows what you conceal and what you reveal. And God is aware of the secrets of the hearts.

5. Have you not heard of those who disbelieved before you? So, they tasted the fruit of their deeds, and for them is a grievous punishment.

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ذٰلِكَ بِاَنَّهٗ كَانَتْ تَّاْتِيْهِمْ رُسُلُهُمْ بِالْبَيِّنٰتِ فَقَالُوْٓا اَبَشَرٌ يَّهْدُوْنَنَا ۫ فَكَفَرُوْا وَتَوَلَّوْا وَّاسْتَغْنَى اللّٰهُ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ غَنِيٌّ حَمِيْدٌ ۝[6]

The verse expresses the reason for which these nations were seized by God's punishment. Even though the prophets were sent with manifest signs and arguments, these nations denied them because of arrogance and haughtiness and made up false excuses such as: asking why the Almighty made human beings His messengers and why He did not choose a superior creation for this purpose; why were they regarded to be such lowly creatures that human beings like them were chosen to guide them; the implication of this being the question, whether were they really so bad that mere human beings were considered enough to guide them. Moreover, they themselves were enough for their own guidance; why then, should they burden themselves with a favour from others!

The words فَكَفَرُوْا وَ تَوَلَّوْا وَّ اسْتَغْنَى اللّٰهُ imply that by making such objections and excuses, these people rejected their messenger and his calls to the truth. The result was that the Almighty also became indifferent to them. It is the practice and law of God that He makes arrangements to guide His people; however, if they do not give due value and weight to this guidance, He becomes unconcerned with them, and leaves them alone to reckon with the consequences of this attitude.

The sentence وَ اللّٰهُ غَنِيٌّ حَمِيْدٌ refers to the fact that if the Almighty wants to guide people it is not because this is something which is to His benefit. Whether people are guided or wander in error is not of any benefit to Him. He does not need any of these attitudes; He is self-sufficient and glorious in His own self. If He makes arrangements to guide people, then this is only because in it lies their benefit; however, if they do not value this, He does not force His guidance upon them.

زَعَمَ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْٓا اَنْ لَّنْ يُّبْعَثُوْا ؕ قُلْ بَلٰى وَرَبِّيْ لَتُبْعَثُنَّ ثُمَّ لَتُنَبَّؤُنَّ بِمَا عَمِلْتُمْ ؕ وَذٰلِكَ عَلَى اللّٰهِ يَسِيْرٌ ۝[7]

Since these disbelievers claim that they will never be resurrected, they give no importance to the call of the prophets.

The words قُلْ بَلٰى وَرَبِّيْ لَتُبْعَثُنَّ direct the Prophet (sws) to reply to them equally vehemently and emphatically and convey to them on oath that they will surely be raised to life. In this sentence, the element of reasoning is stifled, and what is said is a claim in response to a claim because the latter claim has no reasoning behind it; however, concealed in the word وَ رَبِّيْ is a very subtle form of reasoning: the providence of the Almighty, the

6. This is because their prophets continued to come to them with veritable signs; so, they said to them: "Will mortals guide us?" Thus they disbelieved and turned away, and God became indifferent to them and God is self-sufficient and glorious.

7. The disbelievers claim they shall never be raised to life after death. Tell [them:] "Yes! By my Lord, you shall certainly be raised to life! Then you shall be told what you would have done." And this is very easy for God.

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magnificence of which is evident in every speck of this universe, necessitates that He does not deal in the same manner with the righteous and the wrong-doers; this providence necessitates that the former be rewarded for their deeds and the latter be punished. It follows from this that God will definitely raise the dead one day, and hold them accountable for their deeds, and reward or punish them accordingly.

The words وَ ذٰلِكَ عَلَى اللّٰهِ يَسِيْرٌ refer to the fact that these people should not think that God will not be able to do so because He is powerless the way they are to bring about such a great event; it is indeed impossible for them to do so because both their knowledge and power are limited; however, it is very easy for God; He has unlimited power and knowledge.

فَاٰمِنُوْا بِاللّٰهِ وَرَسُوْلِهٖ وَالنُّوْرِ الَّذِيْٓ اَنْزَلْنَا ؕ وَاللّٰهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُوْنَ خَبِيْرٌ ۝۸[8]

This verse admonishingly asks the disbelievers to profess faith. They should not deny the Prophet (sws) by fashioning out such lame excuses, and profess faith in the light sent down by Him. The "light" obviously refers to the Qur'ān revealed by Him to distinguish between the truth and untruth. It should be kept in mind that the light that the Almighty had revealed to the People of the Book was abandoned by them, as is evident from details found in previous *sūrahs*. As a result, it became difficult for them to distinguish between truth and falsehood. However, when the Almighty, once again revealed a fresh light in its ultimate form for the guidance of mankind, then instead of duly honouring it, they tried their best to blow out this light; they neither wanted themselves to benefit from it, nor wanted others to be afforded with an opportunity to do so. At another place, the words of the Qur'ān are: يُرِيْدُوْنَ لِيُطْفِـُٔوْا نُوْرَ اللّٰهِ بِاَفْوَاهِهِمْ وَ اللّٰهُ مُتِمُّ نُوْرِهٖ وَلَوْ كَرِهَ الْكٰفِرُوْنَ. (٦١:٨) (they seek to extinguish the light of God with blows [of air] of their mouths; but God has decided that He will perfect His light, much as the unbelievers may dislike it, (61:8)).

The sentence وَ اللّٰهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُوْنَ خَبِيْرٌ reminds them that they should not think that God is unaware of their deeds. Each and everything they do is in His knowledge, and one day they will have to answer for all this.

يَوْمَ يَجْمَعُكُمْ لِيَوْمِ الْجَمْعِ ذٰلِكَ يَوْمُ التَّغَابُنِ ؕ وَمَنْ يُّؤْمِنْۢ بِاللّٰهِ وَيَعْمَلْ صَالِحًا يُّكَفِّرْ عَنْهُ سَيِّاٰتِهٖ وَيُدْخِلْهُ جَنّٰتٍ تَجْرِيْ مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْاَنْهٰرُ خٰلِدِيْنَ فِيْهَآ اَبَدًا ؕ ذٰلِكَ الْفَوْزُ الْعَظِيْمُ ۝۹ وَالَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا وَكَذَّبُوْا بِاٰيٰتِنَآ اُولٰٓئِكَ اَصْحٰبُ النَّارِ خٰلِدِيْنَ فِيْهَا ؕ وَبِئْسَ الْمَصِيْرُ ۝۱۰[9]

8. So, believe then in God and in His Prophet and in the light that We have revealed. And God has knowledge of all what you are doing.

9. Remember the day when, for the day of assembly, God will gather you. That shall, in fact, be the day of winning and losing. And those who believed and did righteous deeds shall be

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The Quraysh are told that instead of being misled by the notion that the Almighty will not be able to create them a second time, it is to their benefit that they remember the day of gathering on which the Almighty will gather them. This day is bound to come according to His scheme. The arguments in favour of this day are found in the world within man and the one around him and all the prophets and messengers and books of God have borne witness to it. Its advent is necessary to prove that this world is a meaningful creation, and if it does not come, then it would mean that this world is a purposeless creation and the playground of a merry-maker. At another place, the words are: ذٰلِكَ يَوْمٌ مَّجْمُوْعٌ ۙ لَّهُ النَّاسُ وَ ذٰلِكَ يَوْمٌ مَّشْهُوْدٌ (۱۰۳:۱۱) (that is the day for which men shall be assembled and that will be the day of presence, (11:103)). At still another place, the words are: قُلْ اِنَّ الْاَوَّلِيْنَ وَ الْاٰخِرِيْنَ.لَمَجْمُوْعُوْنَ ۙ اِلٰى مِيْقَاتِ يَوْمٍ مَّعْلُوْمٍ (٥٦: ٤٩-٥٠) (tell [them]: "all those of the past and the future shall be brought together on an appointed day," (56:49-50)). The stress in these verses of gathering all mankind on one day is to remove the doubt in the minds of these people that such an event is improbable; their contention was that no one could assemble the countless creatures which have or will inhabit the land and sea. They are emphatically told that the Almighty has appointed a day for this and it is bound to come. Instead of doubting it, they should prepare for it and keep it in their remembrance.

The expression يَوْمُ التَّغَابُنِ has been translated by Shāh 'Abd al-Qādir as "the day of victory and defeat."[10] In my opinion, this translation is very accurate. The Qur'ān itself has subsequently explained this victory and defeat: those who embrace faith and do righteous deeds will be cleansed of the effects of their sins by the Almighty and admitted into gardens watered by streams. These people will remain in them forever, and those who are able to attain this in fact achieve great success. Totally contrary will be the fate of those who rejected the Almighty and denied His signs. They shall be cast into Hell and shall abide in it forever. It will be the worst of abodes.

The implication of the expression يَوْمُ التَّغَابُنِ is that those who have denied the Hereafter regard this world to be a place of victory and defeat. People who enjoy the luxuries of life think that they have won the day and those who have been deprived of them think that they have been doomed. The truth is that this world is not a place of reward; it is a place of trial. The Hereafter is the place of reward where only they will be the victors who embraced faith in this world and did righteous deeds, even though they had nothing from the provisions of life; on the other hand, people who did not embrace faith and did not do righteous deeds will be losers in the Hereafter even if

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forgiven by God, and He will admit them to gardens watered by running streams. They will abide there forever. Supreme success, in fact, is this. And those, who disbelieved and denied Our revelations, it is they who shall be the inmates of the Fire. They shall abide in it forever. And this will be a very evil abode.

10. Shāh 'Abd al-Qādir, *Tarjumah Qur'ān* (Lahore: Pak Company, n.d.), 725.

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they were very affluent in this world.

It needs to be appreciated that it is impossible for people who regard this world to be the place of success and failure, to help and serve others by sacrificing their own comforts and luxuries. Even, if at times, they try to bring themselves to this, the fear of some contingent future need will discourage them from such spending. On the contrary, people who regard the Hereafter to be the place of success and failure cannot be deterred by any such fear. Even if such a distracting thought does arise in them, they will attribute it to Satan, and by God's trust not show the slightest hesitation in such spending to reap success in the Hereafter.

مَآ اَصَابَ مِنۡ مُّصِيۡبَةٍ اِلَّا بِاِذۡنِ اللّٰهِ ؕ وَ مَنۡ يُّؤۡمِنۡۢ بِاللّٰهِ يَهۡدِ قَلۡبَهٗ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ بِكُلِّ شَىۡءٍ عَلِيۡمٌ ﴿۱۱﴾[11]

In this verse, a distracting thought which could impede a person's efforts to achieve success in the Hereafter is removed. He is told not to give any importance to such a thought while obeying God and His Prophet (sws) and while trying to please them. He should remember that no hardship befalls a believer without God's permission. This is such a fact that it cannot be denied by a person who believes in God. So, a person should rest assured that whatever he does while obeying the Almighty will never become for him a source of trial that is beyond his capacity. The Almighty is the most aware of the potential and abilities of His servants. He will never burden a person beyond his capacity.

The sentence وَ مَنۡ يُّؤۡمِنۡۢ بِاللّٰهِ يَهۡدِ قَلۡبَهٗ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ بِكُلِّ شَىۡءٍ عَلِيۡمٌ assures people who are enduring trials in the way of God. If a person remains steadfast in his faith no trial will dishearten him; in fact, the Almighty, through the Holy Spirit will guide his heart at the right time. He is aware of everything and knows what befalls His servants. His help is well-timed through means that man is not aware of. This is precisely what Jesus (sws) had told his students: "Do not worry about how you will defend yourselves or what you will say, for the Holy Spirit will teach you what you should say." (Luke 12:11-12). The twenty second verse of Sūrah al-Ḥadīd also discusses this subject. For details, readers can look up its exegesis.

وَاَطِيۡعُوا اللّٰهَ وَاَطِيۡعُوا الرَّسُوۡلَ ۚ فَاِنۡ تَوَلَّيۡتُمۡ فَاِنَّمَا عَلٰى رَسُوۡلِنَا الۡبَلٰغُ الۡمُبِيۡنُ ﴿۱۲﴾[12]

The Quraysh are directed not to try to evade the obedience of God and His Prophet (sws) by being overcome by wrong notions and superstitions. For, they should remember that the only responsibility of the Prophet (sws) was to deliver in a clear manner, the directives and guidance of God to them. If they fulfill this responsibility,

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11. No misfortune befalls except by God's permission. And he who believes in God, God guides his heart and God has knowledge of all things.

12. And obey God and obey the Prophet. Thus if you pay no heed, Our Prophet's responsibility is only of clear communication.

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then they will do what was required of them by God. The Prophet (sws) will not be asked about their faith; it is they themselves who will be asked why they did not accept his call.

اَللّٰهُ لَآ اِلٰهَ اِلَّا هُوَ ؕ وَعَلَى اللّٰهِ فَلْيَتَوَكَّلِ الْمُؤْمِنُوْنَ ﴿۱۳﴾[13]

There is no other deity in the heavens and in the earth from whom one can fear any harm or expect any benefit. It is only God Who can do this, and thus the believers should trust Him. Their faith entails this very attitude.

يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْٓا اِنَّ مِنْ اَزْوَاجِكُمْ وَاَوْلَادِكُمْ عَدُوًّا لَّكُمْ فَاحْذَرُوْهُمْ ۚ وَاِنْ تَعْفُوْا وَتَصْفَحُوْا وَتَغْفِرُوْا فَاِنَّ اللّٰهَ غَفُوْرٌ رَّحِيْمٌ ﴿۱۴﴾[14]

Mentioned in this verse is one of the greatest trials which cause impediment in the fulfillment of a person's obligations towards his Creator and in expending his life and wealth in the way of God: the love of one's wife and children. Though this is a very natural thing, it is also a great trial for a person. At times, there is a clash between this love and the love of God. If a person's faith is not strong enough, there is a possibility that he will be so overcome by the love and interest of his wife and children that he will end up ignoring his love for God, even though this attitude may ruin his faith. Classical Arabic poets often mention women who rebuke generosity and bravery, and also mentioned in a narrative is the fact that what compels a person the most towards miserliness is his wife and children. It is this phenomenon which is alluded to in this verse by saying that some wives and children are the enemies of the believers. They are instrumental in stopping a person from fulfilling his duties towards God. Although this attitude emanates from them as well-wishers of that person; however, the end result of this is doom for him. Thus in this manner, they in reality prove to be his enemies.

The word مِنْ in the expression اِنَّ مِنْ اَزْوَاجِكُمْ connotes part (للتبعيض) which means that the wife and children of every person are not his enemies. The wife and children of many, instead of causing hindrance in this regard, are helpful in this cause. However, if someone's family is not of this type, then he must protect himself from them so that they do not become a means of doom for him.

The last part of the verse وَاِنْ تَعْفُوْا وَتَصْفَحُوْا وَتَغْفِرُوْا فَاِنَّ اللّٰهَ غَفُوْرٌ رَّحِيْمٌ is an explanation of how one should protect oneself from the evil of one's family: it is essential for a person to

13. God alone is worthy of worship; there is no one worthy of worship except Him, and in God should the believers put their trust.

14. Believers! Some among your wives and children are your enemies; so, beware of them. And if you forgive them, overlook their blemishes and pardon them, then God is forgiving and merciful.

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be watchful that his family does not stop him from the cause of God. At the same time, this should not lead him – as far as is possible for him – to sever his relations with them. He should try as much as he can to forgive and forego their mistakes and realize that God is merciful and forgiving. He will forgive his blemishes and those of his family.

What thus becomes evident from this verse is that the correct attitude for someone who is faced with such a trial is that he should try to protect himself from being misled and to try to reform this weakness of his family through his own words and deeds. He must not sever his relationship with them, unless they commit some act of disbelief, and should keep forgiving them. In other words, he should live with them, while being on guard for his own self and at the same time, is able to reform them.

اِنَّمَآ اَمۡوَالُكُمۡ وَاَوۡلَادُكُمۡ فِتۡنَةٌ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ عِنۡدَهٗۤ اَجۡرٌ عَظِيۡمٌ ﴿۱۵﴾[15]

This verse explains the subject discussed in the preceding one. The word فِتۡنَةٌ refers to "trial" and "test." The Almighty tries a person through his wealth and children. He judges whether he forgets Him by being infatuated by these or makes them a means to earn His love and pleasure. If he adopts the first path, it means that he failed in this test: he gave preference to the love of his wealth and children over the love of God, whereas what was required of him was the reverse. At another place, the Qur'ānic words are: وَالَّذِيۡنَ اٰمَنُوۡۤا اَشَدُّ حُبًّا لِّلّٰهِ. (۲:۱۶۵) (and the believers love God the most, (2:165)). And if they adopt the second path, then this will lead them to success. If by adopting this path, they even incur a loss in this world, they should rest assured that in the Hereafter the Almighty will compensate every loss with great reward.

فَاتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ مَا اسۡتَطَعۡتُمۡ وَاسۡمَعُوۡا وَاَطِيۡعُوۡا وَاَنۡفِقُوۡا خَيۡرًا لِّاَنۡفُسِكُمۡ ؕ وَمَنۡ يُّوۡقَ شُحَّ نَفۡسِهٖ فَاُولٰٓئِكَ هُمُ الۡمُفۡلِحُوۡنَ ﴿۱۶﴾[16]

This verse sounds a final advice on the subject under discussion. They should continue to fear God to protect them from Satan leading them astray. If they fear God as much as is possible for them, God will not let Satan get a hold on them. Otherwise, while being caught in some trial of wealth and children, they will go so far away from the path of God that returning to it will become out of question.

The words وَ اسۡمَعُوۡا وَ اَطِيۡعُوۡا وَ اَنۡفِقُوۡا خَيۡرًا لِّاَنۡفُسِكُمۡ express what is said above in a positive manner: they should listen to and obey God and His Prophet (sws), and respond to their call of spending for the cause of God. The real benefit of this spending will not go to God and His Prophet (sws); it will be reaped by themselves if they spend with

15. Your wealth and your children are a trial for you and with God lies great reward.

16. So, keep fearing God as much as you can and listen and show obedience and spend for your own good. Those who were protected from the malady of their soul's greed will surely attain salvation.

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sincerity and generosity.

The word شُحٌّ in the last part of the verse: وَمَنْ يُّوْقَ شُحَّ نَفْسِهٖ فَاُولٰٓئِكَ هُمُ الْمُفْلِحُوْنَ means "greed and avarice." If this greed found innately in a person dominates him, then it will lead him to doom. Worthy of praise are those servants of God who are protected from this domination; they indeed will be the ones who will succeed in the Hereafter.

The way the word شُحٌّ is associated to نَفْس (soul) in this verse shows that it also is present among various other instincts found in the human soul. However, this is among those instincts against which if a person does not remain on guard will lead him to doom the way sexual drive or anger can. For this reason, it is imperative that it not be left so unchecked that it overpowers the instincts of sacrifice and altruism. The only way to check it is that when a person starts to feel its domination, he should weaken it by spending for the cause of God until it becomes so weak that it is not able to impede virtuous deeds. It is evident from these words of the Qur'ān that those who try to suppress this instinct succeed by the blessing of God, and only those who succeed in this effort are worthy of success in the Hereafter. For this reason, spending for the cause of God is the greatest thing which can earn His pleasure, specially the spending which a person does by disregarding his own personal needs: وَيُؤْثِرُوْنَ عَلٰٓى اَنْفُسِهِمْ وَلَوْ كَانَ بِهِمْ خَصَاصَةٌ. (٥٩:٩) (and they give preference to them over their own selves though they are in want, (59:9)).

اِنْ تُقْرِضُوا اللّٰهَ قَرْضًا حَسَنًا يُّضٰعِفْهُ لَكُمْ وَيَغْفِرْ لَكُمْ ۭ وَاللّٰهُ شَكُوْرٌ حَلِيْمٌ ﴿١٧﴾[17]

This is a mention of the specific after the general. The spending for the cause of God mentioned earlier relates to all types of spending whether it relates to charity or *zakāh,* or *jihād*. In this verse, believers are specifically and emphatically urged to spend for *jihād.* In this context, the word "loan" is always mentioned in the Qur'ān for *jihād*, and the eloquence and appeal in this use does not require any explanation. In Sūrah al-Muzzammil, the words are:

وَاَقِيْمُوا الصَّلٰوةَ وَاٰتُوا الزَّكٰوةَ وَاَقْرِضُوا اللّٰهَ قَرْضًا حَسَنًا. (٧٣:٢٠)

And be diligent in your prayer and pay *zakāh* and give God a goodly loan. (73:20)

Here the words وَاَقْرِضُوا اللّٰهَ قَرْضًا حَسَنًا (give God a goodly loan) after وَاٰتُوا الزَّكٰوةَ (pay *zakāh*) refer to the spending for the cause of God that is required of a believer in specific circumstances.

The word مُضَاعَفَةٌ does not merely mean "to be doubled:" it also means "to increase" whether this increase is of the nature of being doubled or of being multiplied many times (أَضْعَافًا مُضَاعَفَةً). I have already explained this word at an earlier instance in this

17. If you lend a generous loan to God, He will pay you back manifold and will forgive you. And God is the Most Appreciative, the Most Forbearing.

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exegesis. Here, in this verse, it is used in this latter meaning.

The implication of the verse is that if God is asking them for a loan, then this does not mean that He is in need of them. The treasures He owns are countless and brimful, and it is not because of any deficiency in them that He is asking for it. The purpose is to provide these people with an opportunity to earn great profit – as much as ten, in fact seventy times – by spending in His way. The only condition for this loan is that it should be "a goodly loan." I have already explained this term at an earlier instance. It means that this loan should be given from good and pure wealth with generosity and with willingness of the heart and given in spite of the fact that the giver is needy. The loan which has these characteristics will be returned by the Almighty to the lenders while being multiplied greatly and He will also bless them with His forgiveness.

The word شَكُوْرٌ in the expression وَ اللّٰهُ شَكُوْرٌ حَلِيْمٌ means one who accepts with appreciation. Thus, what is meant is that the Almighty greatly values the good deeds of His servants and greatly welcomes them, even though He is self-sufficient and praiseworthy. What is presented by His servants to Him is presented from the very wealth He bestowed upon them. He never regards this to be a meagre contribution, and accepts it by valuing it, and even increases it. Simultaneously, God is also حَلِيْمٌ (Most Forbearing). As a result, He deals very generously with His servants. If they try to shield themselves from sins, He ignores their faults and blemishes.

عٰلِمُ الْغَيْبِ وَالشَّهَادَةِ الْعَزِيْزُ الْحَكِيْمُ ﴿١٨﴾[18]

The implication of the verse is that whatever sacrifice people will make to please Him will never be concealed from His eyes. People should also be rest assured that if they support Him, then He is no weak a being. He is Mighty, and every work of His is replete with wisdom. Those who trust Him always succeed, and those who follow His directives never lose their way.

With the grace of God, I come to the end of this *sūrah's* exegesis. فله الحمد وبيده التوفيق (gratitude is only for Him, and He only blesses us with the urge to do good).

Raḥmānābād
13th April, 1978 AD
4th Jumādī al-Awwal, 1398 AH

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18. He has knowledge of the unknown and the manifest. He is the Mighty, the Wise One.

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Tadabbur i Qur'ān

Sūrah al-Ṭalāq (65)

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Sūrah al-Ṭalāq

Central Theme and relationship with the Preceding and Succeeding *Sūrahs*

In verses 14-16 of Sūrah al-Taghābun, the previous *sūrah*, a warning was sounded that a person's wife and children are a source of great trial for him. If he does not remain vigilant, then, because of his intense love for them, he starts to evade spending his life and wealth for the cause of God. So extreme can this situation become that he adopts a hypocritical behaviour, and in this manner his friendship with them becomes enmity with his own self. At the same time, another warning sounded was that this vigilance does not mean that one should completely sever one's relationship with them; he should, on the contrary, be as much forgiving and foregoing in their matter as is possible for him, so that they are not only reformed, but he himself is also able to protect himself from any harm from them.

After Sūrah al-Taghābun, this sensitive issue is explained further in the next two *sūrahs*, and in both love and hate relationships, the limits of the correct attitude are delineated so that the way to excesses in blocked. In Sūrah al-Ṭalāq, it is explained that if for some reason, a person starts to hate his wife, then how he should observe limits set by God in her matter, and in Sūrah al-Tahrīm, it is elucidated that how a person should observe the limits set by God in situations of love. It is on the husband-wife relation that a society stands. Everyone encounters it; however, in the first place not everyone is aware of its sensitive limits, and he who is aware of them is not able to properly observe them in the commotion of love and hate. If, for some reason, dispute and difference of opinion arises, it manifests into such hatred and enmity that all the bounds and limits of the *sharī'ah* are violated. Similarly, if this relationship is based on love, as it should be, then the respect for the bounds and limits set by God are sacrificed for this love. Both these situations are tantamount to exceeding the limits set by God and deviation from the *sharī'ah* revealed by Him. The result of this attitude is nothing but humiliation in the Hereafter. For this reason, the Qur'ān has pointed out in two separate *sūrahs* that in both these types of situations, a person should not blindly follow his emotions regarding his family; he should, on the contrary, observe the limits defined by God in this regard.

It is evident from this explanation that this *sūrah* and the next are merely an explanation of what is concisely stated in Sūrah al-Taghābun. In both these *sūrahs*, the Prophet (sws) is addressed, and this address begins without any preamble which shows that both are in fact a supplement of the previous *sūrah*. This direct address is

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not related to his person; it relates to his status as the leader and trustee of the Muslims. Examples of such address abound in the Qur'ān. Because of this direct address, the significance of the directives mentioned in these *sūrahs* has become two-fold. The evils which are addressed in them were very common in the age of ignorance that prevailed in Arabia before the advent of the Prophet (sws), and it would be an overstatement to say that such evils exist in every period of civilization. It was a requisite of this situation that in order to redress it, directives are handed out by directly addressing the Prophet (sws). This would make people aware of the fact that when the Prophet (sws) too is told to obey them, then it it becomes essential for them.

Analysis of the Discourse

Verses (1-7): An explanation of the fact that in cases of divorce it is not lawful to expel one's wife from the house immediately by uttering the divorce sentence; it is necessary – whether a person is rich or poor – to follow the proper way prescribed by the Almighty. People, who, in spite of their financial difficulties, set out to observe the limits set by God with a view to please Him, shall receive His special help and assistance. Those who violate the limits set by Him because of their lust for wealth, shall not cause any harm to the Almighty; they shall only be unjust to their own souls.

Verses (8-12): Muslims have been warned that it is a historically proven reality that all those nations who had disobeyed God and His Prophets have always been severely punished by Him. He has done a great favour on the Muslims by sending towards them a Prophet who has led them to the light of guidance from the darkness of ignorance. If they honour this favour of the Almighty, He shall bless them with the eternal favours of Paradise – otherwise they should remember that to Him belongs the kingdom of the heavens and the earth and He certainly has the power to do what He intends.

Text and Translation

بِسۡمِ اللّٰہِ الرَّحۡمٰنِ الرَّحِیۡمِ

یٰۤاَیُّہَا النَّبِیُّ اِذَا طَلَّقۡتُمُ النِّسَآءَ فَطَلِّقُوۡہُنَّ لِعِدَّتِہِنَّ وَ اَحۡصُوا الۡعِدَّۃَ ۚ وَ اتَّقُوا اللّٰہَ رَبَّکُمۡ ۚ لَا تُخۡرِجُوۡہُنَّ مِنۡۢ بُیُوۡتِہِنَّ وَ لَا یَخۡرُجۡنَ اِلَّاۤ اَنۡ یَّاۡتِیۡنَ بِفَاحِشَۃٍ مُّبَیِّنَۃٍ ؕ وَ تِلۡکَ حُدُوۡدُ اللّٰہِ ؕ وَ مَنۡ یَّتَعَدَّ حُدُوۡدَ اللّٰہِ فَقَدۡ ظَلَمَ نَفۡسَہٗ ؕ لَا تَدۡرِیۡ لَعَلَّ اللّٰہَ یُحۡدِثُ بَعۡدَ ذٰلِکَ اَمۡرًا ﴿۱﴾ فَاِذَا بَلَغۡنَ اَجَلَہُنَّ فَاَمۡسِکُوۡہُنَّ بِمَعۡرُوۡفٍ اَوۡ فَارِقُوۡہُنَّ بِمَعۡرُوۡفٍ وَّ اَشۡہِدُوۡا ذَوَیۡ عَدۡلٍ مِّنۡکُمۡ وَ اَقِیۡمُوا الشَّہَادَۃَ لِلّٰہِ ؕ ذٰلِکُمۡ یُوۡعَظُ بِہٖ مَنۡ کَانَ یُؤۡمِنُ بِاللّٰہِ وَ الۡیَوۡمِ الۡاٰخِرِ ؕ وَ مَنۡ یَّتَّقِ اللّٰہَ یَجۡعَلۡ لَّہٗ مَخۡرَجًا ﴿۲﴾ وَّ یَرۡزُقۡہُ مِنۡ حَیۡثُ لَا یَحۡتَسِبُ ؕ وَ مَنۡ یَّتَوَکَّلۡ عَلَی اللّٰہِ فَہُوَ حَسۡبُہٗ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰہَ بَالِغُ اَمۡرِہٖ ؕ قَدۡ جَعَلَ اللّٰہُ لِکُلِّ شَیۡءٍ قَدۡرًا ﴿۳﴾ وَ الّٰٓـِٔیۡ یَئِسۡنَ مِنَ الۡمَحِیۡضِ مِنۡ نِّسَآئِکُمۡ اِنِ ارۡتَبۡتُمۡ فَعِدَّتُہُنَّ ثَلٰثَۃُ اَشۡہُرٍ ۙ وَّ الّٰٓـِٔیۡ لَمۡ یَحِضۡنَ ؕ وَ اُولَاتُ الۡاَحۡمَالِ

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اَجَلُهُنَّ اَنْ يَّضَعْنَ حَمْلَهُنَّ ؕ وَمَنْ يَّتَّقِ اللّٰهَ يَجْعَلْ لَّهٗ مِنْ اَمْرِهٖ يُسْرًا ۝ ذٰلِكَ اَمْرُ اللّٰهِ اَنْزَلَهٗۤ اِلَيْكُمْ ؕ وَمَنْ يَّتَّقِ اللّٰهَ
يُكَفِّرْ عَنْهُ سَيِّاٰتِهٖ وَيُعْظِمْ لَهٗۤ اَجْرًا ۝ اَسْكِنُوْهُنَّ مِنْ حَيْثُ سَكَنْتُمْ مِّنْ وُّجْدِكُمْ وَلَا تُضَآرُّوْهُنَّ لِتُضَيِّقُوْا عَلَيْهِنَّ ؕ وَاِنْ
كُنَّ اُولَاتِ حَمْلٍ فَاَنْفِقُوْا عَلَيْهِنَّ حَتّٰى يَضَعْنَ حَمْلَهُنَّ ۚ فَاِنْ اَرْضَعْنَ لَكُمْ فَاٰتُوْهُنَّ اُجُوْرَهُنَّ ۚ وَاْتَمِرُوْا بَيْنَكُمْ بِمَعْرُوْفٍ ۚ وَ
اِنْ تَعَاسَرْتُمْ فَسَتُرْضِعُ لَهٗۤ اُخْرٰى ۝ لِيُنْفِقْ ذُوْ سَعَةٍ مِّنْ سَعَتِهٖ ؕ وَمَنْ قُدِرَ عَلَيْهِ رِزْقُهٗ فَلْيُنْفِقْ مِمَّاۤ اٰتٰىهُ اللّٰهُ ؕ لَا
يُكَلِّفُ اللّٰهُ نَفْسًا اِلَّا مَاۤ اٰتٰىهَا ؕ سَيَجْعَلُ اللّٰهُ بَعْدَ عُسْرٍ يُّسْرًا ۝ وَكَاَيِّنْ مِّنْ قَرْيَةٍ عَتَتْ عَنْ اَمْرِ رَبِّهَا وَرُسُلِهٖ فَحَاسَبْنٰهَا
حِسَابًا شَدِيْدًا ۙ وَّعَذَّبْنٰهَا عَذَابًا نُّكْرًا ۝ فَذَاقَتْ وَبَالَ اَمْرِهَا وَكَانَ عَاقِبَةُ اَمْرِهَا خُسْرًا ۝ اَعَدَّ اللّٰهُ لَهُمْ عَذَابًا
شَدِيْدًا ۙ فَاتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ يٰۤاُولِي الْاَلْبَابِ ۚ الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا ؕ قَدْ اَنْزَلَ اللّٰهُ اِلَيْكُمْ ذِكْرًا ۝ رَّسُوْلًا يَّتْلُوْا عَلَيْكُمْ اٰيٰتِ اللّٰهِ
مُبَيِّنٰتٍ لِّيُخْرِجَ الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا وَعَمِلُوا الصّٰلِحٰتِ مِنَ الظُّلُمٰتِ اِلَى النُّوْرِ ؕ وَمَنْ يُّؤْمِنْ بِاللّٰهِ وَيَعْمَلْ صَالِحًا يُّدْخِلْهُ جَنّٰتٍ
تَجْرِيْ مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْاَنْهٰرُ خٰلِدِيْنَ فِيْهَاۤ اَبَدًا ؕ قَدْ اَحْسَنَ اللّٰهُ لَهٗ رِزْقًا ۝ اَللّٰهُ الَّذِيْ خَلَقَ سَبْعَ سَمٰوٰتٍ وَّمِنَ الْاَرْضِ
مِثْلَهُنَّ ؕ يَتَنَزَّلُ الْاَمْرُ بَيْنَهُنَّ لِتَعْلَمُوْۤا اَنَّ اللّٰهَ عَلٰى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيْرٌ ۙ وَّاَنَّ اللّٰهَ قَدْ اَحَاطَ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عِلْمًا ۝

In the name of God, the Most Gracious, the Ever-Merciful.

O Prophet! When you divorce women, divorce them in accordance with their waiting period and count their waiting period and have fear of God, your Lord. And do not turn them out from their homes, nor should they themselves go away, unless they are guilty of open lewdness. And these are the bounds set by God and they who transgress God's bounds wrong their own souls. You never know that after this God may create some other situation. (1)

So, when their waiting term ends, either keep them in wedlock according to the custom or part with them according to the custom. And call to witness two trustworthy men among you and adhere to this testimony for God. This is a counsel for those who profess faith in God and the Last Day. And they who fear God, God will find a way out for them and will provide for them from where they cannot even think. And God is all-sufficient for he who puts his trust in Him. God surely accomplishes what He intends. God has set a measure for all things. (2-3)

If you are in doubt concerning those of your women who have ceased menstruating, their waiting period is three months, and also of those who have not yet menstruated. And the waiting period of pregnant women is till childbirth. And he who fears God, God will bring ease for him in his affairs. This is the directive of God which He has revealed to you. So he who fears God, God shall forgive his sins and increase his reward. (4-5)

And lodge them in your own homes, according to your means. And do not harass them so as to make life intolerable for them. And if they are pregnant, spend on them until they deliver the child; then if they suckle your child, give them their remuneration and decide this matter according to the custom after mutual

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consultation. And if you find yourselves in difficulty, another woman can suckle the child. Let the man of means spend according to his means and he, whose resources are restricted, spend according to what God has given him. God does not burden a person with more than He has given him. God will also bring relief after hardship. (6-7)

And many a city rebelled against the directives of its Lord and His Prophets! Then stern was Our reckoning with them, and grievous was Our penalty they faced. So, they tasted the fruit of their misdeeds: and they met with a disastrous fate. God has also prepared a dreadful torment for them. So, have fear of God, O men of intellect and O those who have professed faith. God has sent down to you a reminder; a messenger who reads out to you the clear revelations of God so that he may lead those who embraced faith and did righteous deeds from darkness to light. And those who embrace faith, and do righteous deeds, He shall admit them into gardens watered by running streams. They will abide there forever. A rich provision did God make for him. (8-11)

It is God Who has created seven heavens, and as many earths. His directives descend in them. You may learn from this that God has power over all things, and that God's knowledge encompasses all things. (12)

Explanation

يٰٓاَيُّهَا النَّبِيُّ اِذَا طَلَّقْتُمُ النِّسَآءَ فَطَلِّقُوْهُنَّ لِعِدَّتِهِنَّ وَاَحْصُوا الْعِدَّةَ ۚ وَاتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ رَبَّكُمْ ۚ لَا تُخْرِجُوْهُنَّ مِنْۢ بُيُوْتِهِنَّ وَلَا يَخْرُجْنَ اِلَّآ اَنْ يَّاْتِيْنَ بِفَاحِشَةٍ مُّبَيِّنَةٍ ۭ وَتِلْكَ حُدُوْدُ اللّٰهِ ۭ وَمَنْ يَّتَعَدَّ حُدُوْدَ اللّٰهِ فَقَدْ ظَلَمَ نَفْسَهٗ ۭ لَا تَدْرِيْ لَعَلَّ اللّٰهَ يُحْدِثُ بَعْدَ ذٰلِكَ اَمْرًا ۝[1]

I have already indicated earlier that the Prophet (sws) is not addressed here in his individual capacity but as a representative of the Muslims. The reason for this is that immediately after addressing him, the word طَلَّقْتُمُ is used in which the addressed pronoun is in the plural. It is evident from this use that the directives mentioned here are related to all Muslims. Stating them by addressing the Prophet (sws) has increased their importance much more. The purpose is to engender a feeling of their exaltedness: when the Prophet (sws) is required to obey these directives, Muslims must do so even more.

In the days of *jāhiliyyah*, divorce was generally given by a person in the following manner: when he would be angry with his wife for some reason, he would not merely pronounce three divorce sentences in a single breath, he would declare the divorce

1. O Prophet! When you divorce women, divorce them in accordance with their waiting period and count their waiting period and have fear of God, your Lord. And do not turn them out from their homes, nor should they themselves go away, unless they are guilty of open lewdness. And these are the bounds set by God and they who transgress God's bounds wrong their own souls. You never know that after this God may create some other situation.

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sentence a thousand times. Simultaneously, he would turn out the wife from her house. He would think that why should he feed her with even one meal when he has divorced her. I have already indicated in Sūrah al-Baqarah the harm and damage such a procedure has for the husband and wife, the children, the whole family and even the child that the wife may be carrying in her womb. Here, while keeping this harm and damage in consideration, it is asserted that in a rage of frenzy one must not forget the bounds set by God. All those who do this, do not harm God; they only wrong their own souls.

The sentence اِذَا طَلَّقْتُمُ النِّسَآءَ فَطَلِّقُوْهُنَّ لِعِدَّتِهِنَّ وَاَحْصُوا الْعِدَّةَ refers to the fact that when the stage of divorce comes, then it must be given as per the *'iddat* (waiting period) which must be carefully counted. This aspect has already been explained thus in اَلطَّلَاقُ مَرَّتٰنِ فَاِمْسَاكٌۢ بِمَعْرُوْفٍ اَوْ تَسْرِيْحٌۢ بِاِحْسَانٍ. (۲۲۹:۲) (the divorce may be pronounced twice and then a woman must be retained in honour or allowed to go with kindness, (2:229)). It is evident from this that it is not allowed that a person divorce his wife by pronouncing the divorce three or more times in a single breath. He should divorce her within two months when she is in a state of ceremonial purity which will come twice during this period. Then if he wants to keep her by treating her kindly, he can revoke the divorce in the third period of ceremonial purity. However, if he has decided to separate from her permanently, he should let her go by keeping in consideration the custom of the society. Counting this waiting period is essential for both the husband and wife. For the latter, it is essential because as indicated in verse 228 of Sūrah al-Baqarah quoted above during this period she cannot marry any other person. For the former, it is essential because during this period he can take her back as his wife if he wants to. Once this period expires, he will no longer have this right. Counting this period is also essential because if during it, it is known that the wife is pregnant, then the period will extend to childbirth, and during this period, the husband will be responsible to provide maintenance and residence to the wife.

The words وَ اتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ رَبَّكُمْ urge husbands to fear God who is their Lord: they should abide by the limits set by God, in spite of the anger they may have for the divorced wives; if they exceed these limits, they should bear in mind that they will be violating the limits of the God whose obedience is mandatory upon them, and from whose wrath and grasp none can save them.

The words لَا تُخْرِجُوْهُنَّ مِنْۢ بُيُوْتِهِنَّ وَ لَا يَخْرُجْنَ اِلَّآ اَنْ يَّاْتِيْنَ بِفَاحِشَةٍ مُّبَيِّنَةٍ say that during the waiting period neither do the husbands have the right to turn out their wives from their houses, nor is it allowed for the wives to depart from there. Both should live together in the same house so that they are afforded with a chance of reconciliation, and if there is a possibility of any patch-up, then living together could be of benefit for them. God does not like a husband-wife relationship to be severed. Divorce is a remedy of what cannot be helped. The Almighty has allowed it in such compelling situations, and in the eyes of God, it is the most detestable of things which have been allowed. Thus, to protect His servants from it, He has imposed the condition of the waiting period on

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every divorce, and has also made it mandatory upon the husband and wife to live in the same house even in this state so that both are able to reflect on it cool-headedly before taking the final step if there is any chance of saving the marriage.

The word بُيُوْتِهِنَّ (their houses), used with reference to the wife points to the fact that a husband should not think that the house belongs to him; on the contrary, in this waiting period it also belongs to his wife. For this reason, neither is a husband allowed to turn her out nor is the wife allowed to leave her house in anger. Here, leaving the house obviously does not refer to going out for one's everyday needs; leaving here means leaving the house for good.

The only exception to the above stated principle is, when a husband has divorced his wife because of some act of "open lewdness" (فَاحِشَةٍ مُّبَيِّنَةٍ) committed by her. This of course refers to fornication and acts related to it; this expression is not conventionally used for a lesser crime. If a husband has witnessed such an act from his wife, and this has angered him so much that he took the step of divorcing her, then neither is it right to demand from him to keep such a lady in his house nor is there any hope that the divine directive of living together will be of any benefit. One should not expect an honourable husband to reconcile with a wife whose unfaithfulness has come to his notice. It is for this reason that the husband and wife who reach the stage of *li'ān* are advised by our jurists to separate from one another. This is because one cannot change the feelings of a husband, who has sworn that his wife has committed adultery, even though his wife might have legally countered his blame by swearing of her innocence in response. Similarly, if a husband has divorced his wife for such a reason, it would be futile to expect any change of heart from him.

The words وَتِلْكَ حُدُوْدُ اللّٰهِ ۭ وَمَنْ يَّتَعَدَّ حُدُوْدَ اللّٰهِ فَقَدْ ظَلَمَ نَفْسَهٗ (and these are the bounds set by God and they who transgresses God's bounds are unjust to their own souls) sound an admonition – a stern admonition. It is not for His own benefit that the Almighty has imposed certain bounds on His servants; it is for their own good that He has done so. Those who transgress them should remember that they will only be ruining their personal, familial and collective expediencies.

The words لَا تَدْرِىْ لَعَلَّ اللّٰهَ يُحْدِثُ بَعْدَ ذٰلِكَ اَمْرًا refer to the expediency for which men have been asked not to turn out their divorced wives before the waiting period expires and women have been asked not to permanently leave their homes during this period. One never knows that in this period the Almighty may reunite the two after such a severe disagreement. There is a possibility that in this period the husband and wife realize that they should re-assess their attitude and their distanced hearts get united, and a family is saved from being disbanded. If this happens, then it will greatly please God. He wants to see united hearts and families, and does not like that such differences arise between husband and wife that both end up being separated, and that the children get separated from the mother and the mother from them.

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فَاِذَا بَلَغۡنَ اَجَلَهُنَّ فَاَمۡسِكُوۡهُنَّ بِمَعۡرُوۡفٍ اَوۡ فَارِقُوۡهُنَّ بِمَعۡرُوۡفٍ وَّ اَشۡهِدُوۡا ذَوَىۡ عَدۡلٍ مِّنۡكُمۡ وَ اَقِيۡمُوا الشَّهَادَةَ لِلّٰهِ ؕ ذٰلِكُمۡ يُوۡعَظُ بِهٖ مَنۡ كَانَ يُؤۡمِنُ بِاللّٰهِ وَ الۡيَوۡمِ الۡاٰخِرِ ؕ وَ مَنۡ يَّتَّقِ اللّٰهَ يَجۡعَلۡ لَّهٗ مَخۡرَجًا ۙ﴿۲﴾ وَّ يَرۡزُقۡهُ مِنۡ حَيۡثُ لَا يَحۡتَسِبُ ؕ وَ مَنۡ يَّتَوَكَّلۡ عَلَى اللّٰهِ فَهُوَ حَسۡبُهٗ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ بَالِغُ اَمۡرِهٖ ؕ قَدۡ جَعَلَ اللّٰهُ لِكُلِّ شَىۡءٍ قَدۡرًا ﴿۳﴾[2]

These verses ask the husband to take a final decision once women enter their third period of purity. It was stated in (۲۳۱:۲) وَلَا تُمۡسِكُوۡهُنَّ ضِرَارًا لِّتَعۡتَدُوۡا. (but do not retain them with the intention of harm so that you commit excesses against them, 2:231)) that if husbands decide to retain their wives, then this should not be to harass them. Obviously, if a husband wants, he can do it, because he has the right to take back his wife in this waiting period. However, if he exercises this right to harm and harass them, then he will be using this God-given right for a very unjust and unfair purpose which will entail severe punishment from God.

The words وَ اَشۡهِدُوۡا ذَوَىۡ عَدۡلٍ مِّنۡكُمۡ وَ اَقِيۡمُوا الشَّهَادَةَ لِلّٰهِ direct the husband to call in two reliable witnesses whether he wants to retain his wife or to permanently separate from her so that no possibility remains for a dispute to arise over what actually happened. If this procedure is not adopted, then there is a serious chance that disputes regarding inheritance etc arise in case of the death of either of the two. Our jurists regard this calling to witness to be of the category of *istiḥsān*, and in good societies this is enough. However, because of the disorder that exists in current societies, just as people have been asked to register their marriage, if they are also asked to register their divorce, then this will safeguard them from a lot of bother.

The words وَ اَقِيۡمُوا الشَّهَادَةَ لِلّٰهِ direct Muslims in general and witnesses in particular, to discharge their duty of bearing witness for God. This means that firstly, they should not shirk this responsibility, and secondly, when the time arises for bearing witness, then they should do so fearlessly and without any lenience, purely for the sake of God. They should remember that in this world the Almighty has blessed Muslims with the status of شهداء الله فی الارض (witnesses of God to the truth). For this reason, a Muslim is not the witness of some person or of either party; he is the witness of God, and on this bearing of witness rests his repute in the *ummah*.

The words ذٰلِكُمۡ يُوۡعَظُ بِهٖ مَنۡ كَانَ يُؤۡمِنُ بِاللّٰهِ وَ الۡيَوۡمِ الۡاٰخِرِ refer to the fact that the three things which Muslims have been asked for above are the essential consequences of belief in God and belief in the Hereafter. Those who claim to be such believers are directed to adhere to these three things, otherwise, they should remember that this claim will have

2. So, when their waiting term ends, either keep them in wedlock according to the custom or part with them according to the custom. And call to witness two trustworthy men among you and adhere to this testimony for God. This is a counsel for those who profess faith in God and the Last Day. And they who fear God, God will find a way out for them and will provide for them from where they cannot even think. And God is all-sufficient for he who puts his trust in Him. God surely accomplishes what He intends. God has set a measure for all things.

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no basis.

The sentence وَ مَنْ يَّتَّقِ اللّٰهَ يَجْعَلْ لَّهٗ مَخْرَجًا assures people who abide by the limits set by God: they should trust God that if they face any difficulty, He will show them a way out. He actually tests His servants by putting them through hardships. Those who deviate from the right path because of a lack of courage and endurance will not find any support from God; on the other hand, those who resolve to abide by the limits set by God in spite of facing hardships, will find God easing out their way, as is specified thus by the Qur'ān: وَالَّذِيْنَ جَاهَدُوْا فِيْنَا لَنَهْدِيَنَّهُمْ سُبُلَنَا. (٦٩:٢٩) (those who struggle for Our cause in spite of opposition, We will surely guide to Our own paths, (29:69)).

The words وَمَنْ يَّتَوَكَّلْ عَلَى اللّٰهِ فَهُوَ حَسْبُهٗ are a further explanation of what is said above: God will provide for them, from where they cannot even imagine. I have already indicated earlier that a great motive of husbands – especially belonging to the poor class – for separating their wives by declaring the divorces three times in one breath is financial: they think that once they have divorced their wives, why should they bear the responsibility of providing food and residence for them? Here, the Almighty has assured them that if they bear this burden to abide by the limits of God, He will provide for them from where they cannot even think of. They must not think that God can only help them through the ways and means they are aware of; on the contrary, there are innumerable means available to Him and man only gets to know them when they manifest themselves. At that time, man is confounded at the help he receives, because it appears from where it is inconceivable.

The next portion viz: وَمَنْ يَّتَوَكَّلْ عَلَى اللّٰهِ فَهُوَ حَسْبُهٗ tells us what makes a person worthy of this help of God: he only needs to fully trust God. If a person does so, then he should know that God is sufficient for this help. He does not need means and resources, which are in fact subservient to him. A person should not fear that the adverse circumstances he is facing cannot be changed by God. The fact is that when God intends to help him, nothing can stop Him whatsoever.

The only thing that man must know is that just as God has fixed a time for everything, He has also appointed a time for His help. If there is a delay in it, then, this is only because He wants to try people, whether they show patience or not. A person should rest assured that God will fulfill all His promises. If there is delay in this, then it is only as much as is necessary to try his patience and this trial is for a person's own well-being.

Here, a question arises: if a person does not follow the procedure of divorce mentioned in these verses and divorces his wife through three or more declarations of divorce, then how should this situation be dealt with?

There exists a difference of opinion in the answer to this question between the Hanafite and other jurists. These jurists are of the opinion that all such multiple divorce declarations shall be counted as one; however, according to the Hanafites, such multiple declarations will effectively divorce the wife and the husband who has

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violated the *sharī'ah* in this manner by declaring multiple declarations will be a sinner in the eyes of God.

In my opinion, both these opinions have slight flaws and need to be reformed with due deference for the *sharī'ah* of God. If a person, in spite of such clear directives of the Qur'ān, declares multiple divorces in one go, and he is not even punished for this audacity, then this would mean that no notice has been taken of his making fun of religion. It is essential to check this violation, otherwise the word divorce will become absolutely meaningless even though both the words "marriage" and "divorce" have great significance in the *sharī'ah.* If they are used for the sake of fun, the objectives for which they are spoken materialize. Viewed thus, the opinion held by the Hanafites appears more convincing: they regard such a divorce to be effective; however, there is also one shortcoming in this opinion: it is not enough for a person to be regarded as a sinner in the eyes of God in such a case; this is because if he is also not punished for this violation, people will never give due regard and respect to the procedure prescribed by the Qur'ān. For this reason, it is necessary that besides implementing such a divorce, such a husband should also be given some punishment for jesting with a directive of religion so that those who adopt this wrong procedure are also discouraged.

The basis of the Hanafite opinion rests on an *ijtihād* of 'Umar (rta). As far as I know, the basis of his *ijtihād* is that the divorce of a person who gives it in such a manner should be declared operational – because if he has squandered, he has squandered his own right to take back his wife – however, he must also be punished for violating the limits set by God so that others do not dare follow him. This *ijtihād* is full of wisdom. I follow a certain scope in discussing such juristic corollaries in this exegesis; for this reason, I am confining myself to this hint. I have dealt in detail in some of my articles related to jurisprudence.

وَالّٰٓـِٔيْ يَىِٕسْنَ مِنَ الْمَحِيْضِ مِنْ نِّسَآىِٕكُمْ اِنِ ارْتَبْتُمْ فَعِدَّتُهُنَّ ثَلٰثَةُ اَشْهُرٍ ۙ وَّالّٰٓـِٔيْ لَمْ يَحِضْنَ ؕ وَاُولَاتُ الْاَحْمَالِ اَجَلُهُنَّ اَنْ يَّضَعْنَ حَمْلَهُنَّ ؕ وَمَنْ يَّتَّقِ اللّٰهَ يَجْعَلْ لَّهٗ مِنْ اَمْرِهٖ يُسْرًا ۝[3]

The previous verses mention the *'iddat* of women who menstruate, and whose *'iddat* can be determined through their menstrual or purity cycle. Here, in this verse, the *'iddat* of those women is being delineated who have stopped menstruating or have not yet even started menstruating or if they are pregnant as a result of which they are not menstruating. The verse says that the *'iddat* of the first two categories is three months and that of the third is till childbirth.

Our exegetes have been greatly puzzled by the condition of اِنِ ارْتَبْتُمْ (if you are in

3. If you are in doubt concerning those of your women who have ceased menstruating, their waiting period is three months, and also of those who have not yet menstruated. And the waiting period of pregnant women is till childbirth. And he who fears God, God will bring ease for him in his affairs.

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doubt) which is imposed on women who have stopped menstruating. People have generally translated this verse thus: if you have any doubt regarding their *'iddat*, then God tells you that their *'iddat* is three months. Another opinion is that if a lady is passing blood but it is not certain whether it is the menstrual blood or blood caused by some disease, then the *'iddat* of such a lady is three months.

The first of these opinion is attributed to Sa'īd ibn Jubayr and Ibn Jarīr has given preference to it;[4] however, this opinion has its weaknesses. If the purpose was only to refer to a question raised by some people, then the conventional Qur'ānic format for this is to cite it as a question. The word ارْتَبْتُمْ is not appropriate for this. Moreover, if this was a question, then it should have been about all three types of women referred to here, as is evident from certain narratives. However, the way the word ارْتَبْتُمْ is used here shows that it is mentioned as a condition for women who have stopped menstruating because of old age.

The second of these opinions is attributed to Mujāhid, Zuhrī and Ibn Zayd.[5] The first question which raises a doubt on this opinion is that if the issue related to women who were passing blood but they were not sure whether this was menstrual blood or blood because of some disease, then it is not appropriate at all that such women be called those have not menstruated (the words used are وَالّٰٓئِۣ يَىِٕسْنَ مِنَ الْمَحِيْضِ). Secondly, if this opinion is accepted, it will mean that if there is no doubt about such a woman who is not menstruating, then there is no *'iddat* for her. She will be separated immediately after divorce. However, as far as I know, though a lady who is not menstruating and also has not had sexual intercourse with her husband is not bound to observe any *'iddat.* However, a lady who is not menstruating but has had sexual intercourse with her husband must observe the *'iddat* period.

Because of these doubts it seems to me that the condition of اِنِ ارْتَبْتُمْ (if you are doubtful) is to differentiate between a lady who does not menstruate because of age but has had sexual intercourse with her husband and a lady in a similar state but who did not have sexual intercourse with her husband. For if a lady who does not menstruate because of age has had sexual intercourse with the husband there might be a chance of pregnancy if her state was temporary for some reason. A similar situation may arise for a lady who has not menstruated in spite of reaching the age and she has sexual intercourse with her husband. Consequently, on this basis, since there is no *'iddat* for a lady who has stopped menstruating because of age and also has had sexual intercourse with the husband and for a girl who has yet to menstruate and has had sexual intercourse with the husband but since there is a doubt in their matter, hence such and such is their *'iddat*. It is possible that the question may arise in the mind of a person that if this was the case, then why did the Qur'ān not explicitly state that the *'iddat* of a lady who does not menstruate because of age and who has had sexual

4.Al-Tabarī, *Jāmi' al-Bayān*, vol. 28, 158-159.
5. Ibid., vol. 28, 158.

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intercourse is three months. The answer to this question is that such a statement of the Qur'ān would not have pointed to the underlying reason of *'iddat* – which was essential to be highlighted. This underlying reason is not merely the fact that whether a lady has had sexual intercourse or not: it is the possibility that she may be pregnant.

The words وَ اُولَاتُ الۡاَحۡمَالِ اَجَلُهُنَّ اَنۡ يَّضَعۡنَ حَمۡلَهُنَّ inform us that the *'iddat* of a pregnant woman is till childbirth.

A question arises abut this directive: in Sūrah al-Baqarah, the *'iddat* of a widow is stated to be four months and ten days, and the verse under discussion states the *'iddat* of a pregnant woman; what will be the *'iddat* of a divorced pregnant woman whose husband dies? Is it four months and ten days or should it extend to childbirth? The answer to this question is that the *'iddat* of a pregnant woman cannot be fixed on the basis of months or days. It has to extend to childbirth. This of course can be less than four months and ten days and can be more also. If it is more, she is liable to observe it, and if it is less, then she should also have the right to benefit from it. In other words, both these directives relate to separate situations, and both will remain implemented in their respective spheres.

The sentence وَمَنۡ يَّتَّقِ اللّٰهَ يَجۡعَلۡ لَّهٗ مِنۡ اَمۡرِهٖ يُسۡرًا mentions with slight change of words what is mentioned in verse two. These warnings are coupled with directives so that people should not regard the *sharī'ah* to be a burden. The implication is that some people will consider the expenses they have to bear of the divorced women in their *'iddat* to be a burden; however, people who fear God, and will observe as much as they can the limits set by Him, will encounter ease and comfort. If people decide to bear the burden laid on them by the Almighty, then He helps in this matter, and this help comes from where they cannot even imagine – as was stated earlier. One must not make this evil estimation about God that He will burden His servants with what they will not be able to bear; nor should one think that after laying this burden on them, He will leave them to tackle it alone.

ذٰلِكَ اَمۡرُ اللّٰهِ اَنۡزَلَهٗۤ اِلَيۡكُمۡ ؕ وَمَنۡ يَّتَّقِ اللّٰهَ يُكَفِّرۡ عَنۡهُ سَيِّاٰتِهٖ وَيُعۡظِمۡ لَهٗۤ اَجۡرًا ۝[6]

This verse stresses what is stated earlier: Since these are God's directives that have been revealed to them, they must not regard them to be insignificant and should also not think that He will dissociate from them once He reveals these directives to them; on the contrary, He will help them if they bear their burden, and punish them also if they shirk this responsibility.

The words وَمَنۡ يَّتَّقِ اللّٰهَ يُكَفِّرۡ عَنۡهُ سَيِّاٰتِهٖ وَيُعۡظِمۡ لَهٗۤ اَجۡرًا sound an assurance: the Almighty will forgive people who abide as much as they can by the limits set by God. He will blot their minor sins, and increase the reward of their virtuous deeds.

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6. This is the directive of God which He has revealed to you. So, he who fears God, God shall forgive his sins and increase his reward.

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اَسۡكِنُوۡهُنَّ مِنۡ حَيۡثُ سَكَنۡتُمۡ مِّنۡ وُّجۡدِكُمۡ وَلَا تُضَآرُّوۡهُنَّ لِتُضَيِّقُوۡا عَلَيۡهِنَّ ؕ وَاِنۡ كُنَّ اُولَاتِ حَمۡلٍ فَاَنۡفِقُوۡا عَلَيۡهِنَّ حَتّٰى يَضَعۡنَ حَمۡلَهُنَّ ۚ فَاِنۡ اَرۡضَعۡنَ لَكُمۡ فَاٰتُوۡهُنَّ اُجُوۡرَهُنَّ ۚ وَاۡتَمِرُوۡا بَيۡنَكُمۡ بِمَعۡرُوۡفٍ ۚ وَاِنۡ تَعَاسَرۡتُمۡ فَسَتُرۡضِعُ لَهٗۤ اُخۡرٰى ۝[7]

The word وُجۡد means "earning." The standard of living of a person is in accordance with his resources. Husbands are directed to provide women with the same standard of living which they themselves enjoy: it is not allowed that husbands themselves live in villas and house their wives in a servant quarter or a garage, and send their left-over edibles to them for their consumption.

The words وَلَا تُضَآرُّوۡهُنَّ لِتُضَيِّقُوۡا عَلَيۡهِنَّ refer to the fact that if a person does not accept these directives of God from his heart, then, while outwardly obeying them, he can still adopt ways and means to make life so miserable for his wife that it becomes difficult for her to even stay for twenty hours. If this happens, then the very purpose of expediency for which these directives have been given is sacrificed. For this reason, the husbands have been asked not to adopt ways and means which may make them run away from the house.

The words وَاِنۡ كُنَّ اُولَاتِ حَمۡلٍ فَاَنۡفِقُوۡا عَلَيۡهِنَّ حَتّٰى يَضَعۡنَ حَمۡلَهُنَّ give a specific directive for divorced pregnant women; husbands are told that they should provide for them till childbirth. The directive has been emphatically given here, because their stay can extend for long periods, and in certain circumstances the nature of their expenses can also be different.

The words فَاِنۡ اَرۡضَعۡنَ لَكُمۡ فَاٰتُوۡهُنَّ اُجُوۡرَهُنَّ ۚ وَاۡتَمِرُوۡا بَيۡنَكُمۡ بِمَعۡرُوۡفٍ refer to the stage after childbirth. If such a woman suckles the child she has borne to her husband, then the latter must enter into a contract of payment with her through mutual consultation. This payment should be in accordance with the customs of the society and according to the status of the husband.

The words وَاِنۡ تَعَاسَرۡتُمۡ فَسَتُرۡضِعُ لَهٗۤ اُخۡرٰى say that if the husband and wife are finding it difficult to enter into such a contract, they can ask some other woman to suckle the infant. In other words, such a contract is based on the mutual consent and understanding of the parties and on their ease and comfort. No one can be forced against his or her will in this matter. I have already explained in detail the directives relate to suckling under verse 233 of Sūrah al-Baqarah. Those interested can look them up. It is beyond the scope of this exegesis to delve into intricate juristic issues.

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7. And lodge them in your own homes, according to your means. And do not harass them so as to make life intolerable for them. And if they are pregnant, spend on them until they deliver the child; then if they suckle your child, give them their remuneration and decide this matter according to the custom after mutual consultation. And if you find yourselves in difficulty, another woman can suckle the child.

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لِيُنْفِقْ ذُوْ سَعَةٍ مِّنْ سَعَتِهٖ ؕ وَمَنْ قُدِرَ عَلَيْهِ رِزْقُهٗ فَلْيُنْفِقْ مِمَّآ اٰتٰىهُ اللّٰهُ ؕ لَا يُكَلِّفُ اللّٰهُ نَفْسًا اِلَّا مَآ اٰتٰىهَا ؕ سَيَجْعَلُ اللّٰهُ بَعْدَ عُسْرٍ يُّسْرًا ۝[8]

It is not allowed for the person who has resources at his disposal to keep such women below his standard of living, and similarly, people who have restricted resources should not be burdened beyond their capacity. The Almighty has made each person liable for this responsibility according to his means and resources.

The words سَيَجْعَلُ اللّٰهُ بَعْدَ عُسْرٍ يُّسْرًا sound an immediate assurance to the poor: if they show patience and contentment and, in spite of hardships try to abide by the limits set by God, they will be provided with ease and comfort after the trying circumstances they are facing. People who in spite of their poverty and need adopt an attitude of sacrifice are blessed with abundance in sustenance by the Almighty.

وَكَاَيِّنْ مِّنْ قَرْيَةٍ عَتَتْ عَنْ اَمْرِ رَبِّهَا وَرُسُلِهٖ فَحَاسَبْنٰهَا حِسَابًا شَدِيْدًا ۙ وَّعَذَّبْنٰهَا عَذَابًا نُّكْرًا ۝[9]

In order to understand the occasion and significance of this verse, readers are advised to take a look at verse 6-8 of Sūrah al-Taghābun. This is a general warning addressed to both the Quraysh and the Muslims: the Almighty has revealed His teachings for their guidance. If they honour and value them, then this is only for their own benefit, and if they deviate from them, then they must remember that the Almighty has severely reckoned with and gravely punished many a nation that existed before them when they did not honour His directives and the teachings of His prophets. This is a reference to the nations of 'Ād and Thamūd as well as to the Jews who were blessed with the *sharī'ah* of God, but they did not honour and value it, and as a result were severely punished for this attitude.

The preposition عَنْ in عَتَتْ عَنْ اَمْرِ رَبِّهَا is a clear indication of the fact that the word عَتَتْ encompasses the meaning of أَعْرَضَتْ. The implied meaning being that because of arrogance they showed indifference to the directive of their Lord. The word حَاسَبْنَا here connotes accountability: the Almighty sternly seized them and gravely punished them. The word نُكْر means "severe and horrible."

فَذَاقَتْ وَبَالَ اَمْرِهَا وَكَانَ عَاقِبَةُ اَمْرِهَا خُسْرًا ۝[10]

When these nations were called to account by God, they had to face the

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[8]. Let the man of means spend according to his means and he whose resources are restricted, spend according to what God has given him. God does not burden a person with more than He has given him. God will also bring relief after hardship.

[9]. And many a city rebelled against the directives of its Lord and His Prophets! Then stern was Our reckoning with them, and grievous was Our penalty they faced.

10. So, they tasted the fruit of their misdeeds: and they met with a disastrous fate.

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consequences of their arrogance, and they met with a dreadful fate. Thus, the only path that leads to salvation is the one delineated by God and His prophet. If nations, because of their arrogance and rebelliousness deviate from this path, they are necessarily doomed.

اَعَدَّ اللّٰهُ لَهُمْ عَذَابًا شَدِيْدًا ۙ فَاتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ يٰٓاُولِي الْاَلْبَابِ ۚ الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا ۛ قَدْ اَنْزَلَ اللّٰهُ اِلَيْكُمْ ذِكْرًا ۝١٠ رَّسُوْلًا يَّتْلُوْا عَلَيْكُمْ اٰيٰتِ اللّٰهِ مُبَيِّنٰتٍ لِّيُخْرِجَ الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا وَعَمِلُوا الصّٰلِحٰتِ مِنَ الظُّلُمٰتِ اِلَى النُّوْرِ ۭ وَمَنْ يُّؤْمِنْۢ بِاللّٰهِ وَيَعْمَلْ صَالِحًا يُّدْخِلْهُ جَنّٰتٍ تَجْرِيْ مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْاَنْهٰرُ خٰلِدِيْنَ فِيْهَآ اَبَدًا ۭ قَدْ اَحْسَنَ اللّٰهُ لَهٗ رِزْقًا ۝١١[11]

These verses sound a very clear warning to the Muslims and at the same time appeal to them in a very effective manner.

The implication of فَاتَّقُوا اللّٰهَ يٰٓاُولِي الْاَلْبَابِ ۚ الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا is that when the Almighty has dealt with previous nations as per the law and practice mentioned, then it is only wise for men of intellect who have professed faith to fear God. In other words, if people have embraced faith, it does prove that they are not slaves of their desires, and are people having sense and reason. Fear of God is a natural consequence of faith; so they must not exceed the limits set by Him, otherwise their fate will be no different from the one met by previous nations who deviated from the path towards which God had guided them.

The mention of الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا after يٰٓاُولِي الْاَلْبَابِ shows that there is an inseparable relationship between faith and intellect. It is essential for a person who possesses intellect to embrace faith. Similarly, if a person does not profess faith, there is something very wrong with his intellect, even if he is so competent a person as one who can measure the expanse of the heavens and the earth.

The words قَدْ اَنْزَلَ اللّٰهُ اِلَيْكُمْ ذِكْرًا. رَّسُوْلًا يَّتْلُوْا عَلَيْكُمْ اٰيٰتِ اللّٰهِ مُبَيِّنٰتٍ لِّيُخْرِجَ الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا وَعَمِلُوا الصّٰلِحٰتِ مِنَ الظُّلُمٰتِ اِلَى النُّوْرِ refer to the elaborate arrangement made by the Almighty to communicate the truth in a conclusive manner: He has revealed a reminder to them and also sent a messenger who recites the verses of God before people who have embraced faith and have done righteous deeds. The purpose is to show light to people enveloped in darkness. The implication is that even after this elaborate arrangement, if people prefer darkness to light, then they themselves will be responsible for this attitude, and they will have no excuse to present before the Almighty for remaining astray.

In the expression ذِكْرًا رَّسُوْلًا the first word refers to the Qur'ān, which has also been alluded to by the words ذِكْرٰى and الذِّكْرَ at other places. I have already explained the

11. God has also prepared a dreadful torment for them. So have fear of God, O men of intellect and O those who have professed faith. God has sent down to you a reminder; a messenger who reads out to you the clear revelations of God, so that he may lead those who embraced faith and did righteous deeds from darkness to light. And those who embrace faith, and do righteous deeds, He shall admit them into gardens watered by running streams. They will abide there forever. A rich provision did God make for him.

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consequences of this term at an appropriate place in this exegesis. The Qur'ān reminds a person of everything found in human nature. Furthermore, it also reminds people of the teachings which God revealed in various periods of time to guide them, and which were often rejected by previous nations. It also reminds people of how the Almighty dealt with those who rejected His messengers sent to them. Most of all, it reminds people of the reward and punishment which will necessarily manifest on a particular day at the culmination of this world. This day is the very purpose of this world.

The word رَسُولًا is a permutative (*badal*) of ذِكْرًا and this relationship shows that the two are related to one another as the soul and body are. Thus, just as the word ذِكْرٌ (reminder) is used for the Qurān, a messenger is called a مُذَكِّرٌ (one who reminds) as in اِنَّمَآ اَنْتَ مُذَكِّرٌ (۸۸:۲۱) (your duty is only to remind them, (88:21)). The life of the Prophet Muhammad (sws) was an embodiment of reminding people of the facts the Qur'ān was revealed. Thus, whatever the Qur'ān taught, the Prophet (sws) practically adopted. As a result of this, the truth was conclusively communicated to people, and they were left with no excuse to deny it.

The words قَدْ اَحْسَنَ اللّٰهُ لَهٗ رِزْقًا refer to the fact that he who embraces faith and does righteous deeds should rest assured that this is not a loss-incurring deal; the Almighty has prepared for him a rich provision in the Hereafter. In verse 3 earlier, he, who was ready to sacrifice for others and to trust God was given glad tidings of God's help in this world. Here, glad tidings are given to him regarding the Hereafter.

اَللّٰهُ الَّذِیْ خَلَقَ سَبْعَ سَمٰوٰتٍ وَّ مِنَ الْاَرْضِ مِثْلَهُنَّ ؕ یَتَنَزَّلُ الْاَمْرُ بَیْنَهُنَّ لِتَعْلَمُوْۤا اَنَّ اللّٰهَ عَلٰی كُلِّ شَیْءٍ قَدِیْرٌ ۙ۬ وَّ اَنَّ اللّٰهَ قَدْ اَحَاطَ بِكُلِّ شَیْءٍ عِلْمًا ﴿۱۲﴾[12]

Here, at the end, the Almighty has reminded people of His attributes of power and knowledge so that what is said above – whether it relates to warning or assurance – is firmly rooted in their hearts; they get to know that tremendous is God's power and He can do anything He wants to and that His knowledge also embraces everything. Nothing of the seven heavens and the earths is hidden from Him. If a person has done a virtuous act, it is in His knowledge and if a person has done some evil, then this is also in His knowledge. Obviously, when one does not have this deep comprehension regarding the Almighty, one cannot fulfill his obligation of duly respecting the *sharī'ah*.

The words اَللّٰهُ الَّذِیْ خَلَقَ سَبْعَ سَمٰوٰتٍ وَّ مِنَ الْاَرْضِ مِثْلَهُنَّ inform man of God's extensive power. Man should not think that the universe comprises of all that what he can observe; what he can see is a very limited and tiny part of the overall universe He has created. He has created seven heavens similar to the heavens man sees, and not created just one

[12]. It is God Who has created seven heavens, and as many earths. His directives descend in them. You may learn from this that God has power over all things, and that God's knowledge encompasses all things.

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earth on which he walks about; each of the seven heavens has a separate earth.

Seven heavens have been mentioned several times in the Qur'ān and also in other divine scriptures; however, seven earths are only mentioned in this *sūrah*. When seven heavens are mentioned, then it is essential that there exist seven earths too. The heavens and the earth are related to one another as the roof is related to a house. So when the roofs are seven, houses must also be seven. Just as one cannot imagine the earth without the sky, one cannot imagine the sky without the earth. For every zenith here has to be a nadir.

As far as questions such as: "do all the seven heavens and earths follow the same physical and natural laws and do the same living creatures inhabit them or are these laws and creatures are different?" is concerned, then merely the word مِثْلَهُنَّ (similar to them) does not necessitate the first of these inferences. This similarity only relates to the similarity in their number: just as the Almighty has created seven heavens, He has also created seven earths. As far as the laws which are followed in them are concerned, the Almighty has neither disclosed them to us nor can we understand them. It is enough for us to believe in the existence of heavens and earths beyond our own heaven and earth.

Our science is wandering about in the infinite expanse of space; if it unveils one secret, it is faced with several others. However, there is no reason to despair. If science is unable to unlock these secrets, *inshā'Allāh* we will get to know about them in the Hereafter. Man has been given very limited knowledge in this world: وَمَآ اُوْتِيْتُمْ مِّنَ الْعِلْمِ اِلَّا قَلِيْلًا. (۱۷:۸۵) (little indeed is the knowledge given to you, (17:85)).

The words يَتَنَزَّلُ الْاَمْرُ بَيْنَهُنَّ refer to the fact that just as in the sky and earth known to us, God's laws and directives are revealed, similar is the case with other skies and earths.

The implication of the words لِتَعْلَمُوْٓا اَنَّ اللّٰهَ عَلٰى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيْرٌ is that the Almighty has unfolded this secret to man so that he knows that there is no limit to God's power. There is an appropriate verb suppressed before لِتَعْلَمُوْٓا. Examples of such suppression can be seen in earlier *sūrahs* as well.

The words وَ اَنَّ اللّٰهَ قَدْ اَحَاطَ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عِلْمًا allude to the second objective of unveiling this secret: just as His power as unlimited, His knowledge is also unlimited; He knows each and everything of all these heavens and earths.

By the grace of God, I come to the end of this *sūrah's* exegesis.فللّٰه الحمد و له المنة (gratitude is to Him and favours are from Him)

Raḥmānābād,
25th April 1978 AD
16th Jumadī al-Awwal, 1398 AH

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Tadabbur i Qur’ān

Sūrah al-Taḥrīm (66)

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Sūrah al-Taḥrīm

Central Theme and relationship with the Previous *Sūrah*

I have already indicated in the exegesis of Sūrah al-Ṭalāq, the previous *sūrah,* that both these *sūrahs* respectively teach us that in situations of both hate and love, a person must obey the bounds set by God. The previous *sūrah* teaches us how these bounds must be respected in situations of hate. This *sūrah*, on the other hand, teaches us how these bounds should not be violated in situations of love.

Like hate, if a person is overcome by love, he becomes one-track minded. He becomes very insensitive and compromising to the bounds set by God in the matters of his loved ones. Even if he sees his wife and children openly deviating from the dictates of the *sharī'ah*, he either does not realize this deviation, or ignores it, deeming that they will slowly mend their ways. So much so, many people instead of checking and asking their relatives to refrain from their obvious excesses try to find excuses to hide these transgressions. This shortcoming is not merely found in the masses, it is also found in people who want to reform others by policing them allegedly on behalf of God. The reason for this attitude is that such people are not aware of the fact that it is not a requisite of their love towards a person that a compromising attitude be adopted in this regard and he be entrusted to the wrath of God; on the contrary, the true requisite of a person's love for someone is that in whatever manner possible, he shield his loved one from the wrath of God even if he has to tolerate agonizing situations for this purpose. He who forgoes the *sharī'ah*-flouting attitude of his loved ones is not, in fact, showing love to them; on the contrary, he is responsible for callously consigning them to the wrath of God, without being aware of its consequences.

Analysis of the Discourse

Verses (1-5): The Prophet (sws) has been checked by the Almighty in a particular matter. Though the driving force in this matter is showing mercy to the weak and consoling his wives, yet, since he is to become an example for the whole *ummah,* any virtuous deed which crosses the limits set by God is not permissible. The Prophet (sws) might be doing something to console and please his wives and he might be showing sympathy to their perfectly human weaknesses yet owing to his position as a Prophet, he must remain within the bounds set by God, even in the smallest of affairs.

Similarly, the pious wives have been checked in a matter in which something said by the Prophet (sws) to a particular wife is disclosed by her to another wife, though in an

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atmosphere of mutual trust. However, since they too, are to become an example for all women of the *ummah*, they are more responsible than others to be cautious about crossing the limits set by God, even though the motive may be based on mutual trust and on desiring well for one another. A warning is sounded that the higher the position and status of a person, the higher the extent of his or her accountability.

Verses (6-8): After checking the Prophet (sws) and his wives, general Muslims are urged to continually check and restrain their near ones in order to save themselves from the punishment of the Hereafter. Everyone should remember that the angels who guard Hell are strict and stern. They shall show no lenience to any one. On the Day of Judgement, no excuse of a person will be acceptable, for he shall be facing only what he deserves and no one shall be punished for more than what he has done. Only those people will triumph on that Day whose pure repentance makes them eligible for the Almighty's blessings. It will be a Day of success for the Prophet (sws) and his Companions. The Almighty shall perfect their light which shall lead them to Paradise. Everyone else shall be doomed forever.

Verses (9-12): The Prophet (sws) has been emphatically directed to sternly tell the disbelievers and the hypocrites to change their attitude, lest they end up in the raging fire of Hell which, of course, is the worst abode. At the end, examples of the wives of the Prophet Noah (sws) and the Prophet Lot (sws) are cited to the disbelievers and those of the wife of the Pharaoh and Mary (rta) to the believers. The purpose is to prove that only a person's faith and deeds will be of any benefit to him in the Hereafter. If these are not present, even being the wife of such great prophets as Noah (sws) and Lot (sws) will be of no benefit to these women in the Hereafter. Similarly, if these are present, a woman can deserve the highest reward in the Hereafter even though she may be the wife of a person as rebellious as the Pharaoh.

Text and Translation

بِسۡمِ اللّٰہِ الرَّحۡمٰنِ الرَّحِیۡمِ

یٰۤاَیُّہَا النَّبِیُّ لِمَ تُحَرِّمُ مَاۤ اَحَلَّ اللّٰہُ لَکَ ۚ تَبۡتَغِیۡ مَرۡضَاتَ اَزۡوَاجِکَ ؕ وَ اللّٰہُ غَفُوۡرٌ رَّحِیۡمٌ ﴿۱﴾ قَدۡ فَرَضَ اللّٰہُ لَکُمۡ تَحِلَّۃَ
اَیۡمَانِکُمۡ ۚ وَ اللّٰہُ مَوۡلٰىکُمۡ ۚ وَ ہُوَ الۡعَلِیۡمُ الۡحَکِیۡمُ ﴿۲﴾ وَ اِذۡ اَسَرَّ النَّبِیُّ اِلٰی بَعۡضِ اَزۡوَاجِہٖ حَدِیۡثًا ۚ فَلَمَّا نَبَّاَتۡ بِہٖ وَ اَظۡہَرَہُ اللّٰہُ
عَلَیۡہِ عَرَّفَ بَعۡضَہٗ وَ اَعۡرَضَ عَنۡۢ بَعۡضٍ ۚ فَلَمَّا نَبَّاَہَا بِہٖ قَالَتۡ مَنۡ اَنۡۢبَاَکَ ہٰذَا ؕ قَالَ نَبَّاَنِیَ الۡعَلِیۡمُ الۡخَبِیۡرُ ﴿۳﴾ اِنۡ تَتُوۡبَاۤ اِلَی
اللّٰہِ فَقَدۡ صَغَتۡ قُلُوۡبُکُمَا ۚ وَ اِنۡ تَظٰہَرَا عَلَیۡہِ فَاِنَّ اللّٰہَ ہُوَ مَوۡلٰىہُ وَ جِبۡرِیۡلُ وَ صَالِحُ الۡمُؤۡمِنِیۡنَ ۚ وَ الۡمَلٰٓئِکَۃُ بَعۡدَ ذٰلِکَ ظَہِیۡرٌ
﴿۴﴾ عَسٰی رَبُّہٗۤ اِنۡ طَلَّقَکُنَّ اَنۡ یُّبۡدِلَہٗۤ اَزۡوَاجًا خَیۡرًا مِّنۡکُنَّ مُسۡلِمٰتٍ مُّؤۡمِنٰتٍ قٰنِتٰتٍ تٰٓئِبٰتٍ عٰبِدٰتٍ سٰٓئِحٰتٍ ثَیِّبٰتٍ وَّ اَبۡکَارًا
﴿۵﴾ یٰۤاَیُّہَا الَّذِیۡنَ اٰمَنُوۡا قُوۡۤا اَنۡفُسَکُمۡ وَ اَہۡلِیۡکُمۡ نَارًا وَّ قُوۡدُہَا النَّاسُ وَ الۡحِجَارَۃُ عَلَیۡہَا مَلٰٓئِکَۃٌ غِلَاظٌ شِدَادٌ لَّا یَعۡصُوۡنَ اللّٰہَ
مَاۤ اَمَرَہُمۡ وَ یَفۡعَلُوۡنَ مَا یُؤۡمَرُوۡنَ ﴿۶﴾ یٰۤاَیُّہَا الَّذِیۡنَ کَفَرُوۡا لَا تَعۡتَذِرُوا الۡیَوۡمَ ؕ اِنَّمَا تُجۡزَوۡنَ مَا کُنۡتُمۡ تَعۡمَلُوۡنَ ﴿۷﴾ یٰۤاَیُّہَا

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الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا تُوْبُوْٓا اِلَى اللّٰهِ تَوْبَةً نَّصُوْحًا ؕ عَسٰى رَبُّكُمْ اَنْ يُّكَفِّرَ عَنْكُمْ سَيِّاٰتِكُمْ وَيُدْخِلَكُمْ جَنّٰتٍ تَجْرِيْ مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْاَنْهٰرُ ۙ
يَوْمَ لَا يُخْزِي اللّٰهُ النَّبِيَّ وَالَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا مَعَهٗ ۚ نُوْرُهُمْ يَسْعٰى بَيْنَ اَيْدِيْهِمْ وَبِاَيْمَانِهِمْ يَقُوْلُوْنَ رَبَّنَآ اَتْمِمْ لَنَا نُوْرَنَا وَاغْفِرْ
لَنَا ۚ اِنَّكَ عَلٰى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيْرٌ ﴿٨﴾ يٰٓاَيُّهَا النَّبِيُّ جَاهِدِ الْكُفَّارَ وَالْمُنٰفِقِيْنَ وَاغْلُظْ عَلَيْهِمْ ؕ وَمَاْوٰىهُمْ جَهَنَّمُ ؕ وَبِئْسَ
الْمَصِيْرُ ﴿٩﴾ ضَرَبَ اللّٰهُ مَثَلًا لِّلَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوا امْرَاَتَ نُوْحٍ وَّامْرَاَتَ لُوْطٍ ؕ كَانَتَا تَحْتَ عَبْدَيْنِ مِنْ عِبَادِنَا صَالِحَيْنِ فَخَانَتٰهُمَا
فَلَمْ يُغْنِيَا عَنْهُمَا مِنَ اللّٰهِ شَيْـًٔا وَّقِيْلَ ادْخُلَا النَّارَ مَعَ الدّٰخِلِيْنَ ﴿١٠﴾ وَضَرَبَ اللّٰهُ مَثَلًا لِّلَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوا امْرَاَتَ فِرْعَوْنَ ۘ
اِذْ قَالَتْ رَبِّ ابْنِ لِيْ عِنْدَكَ بَيْتًا فِي الْجَنَّةِ وَنَجِّنِيْ مِنْ فِرْعَوْنَ وَعَمَلِهٖ وَنَجِّنِيْ مِنَ الْقَوْمِ الظّٰلِمِيْنَ ﴿١١﴾ وَمَرْيَمَ ابْنَتَ عِمْرٰنَ
الَّتِيْٓ اَحْصَنَتْ فَرْجَهَا فَنَفَخْنَا فِيْهِ مِنْ رُّوْحِنَا وَصَدَّقَتْ بِكَلِمٰتِ رَبِّهَا وَكُتُبِهٖ وَكَانَتْ مِنَ الْقٰنِتِيْنَ ﴿١٢﴾

In the name of God, the Most Gracious, the Ever-Merciful.

O Prophet! Why do you prohibit that which God has made lawful for you to please your wives? And God is Forgiving and Merciful. And God has made it mandatory upon you to break oaths sworn in violation of the *sharī'ah*. And God is your Master and He is Omniscient and Wise. (1-2)

And when the Prophet confided a secret to one of his wives; so, when she disclosed it and God informed the Prophet of this, he expressed some part of it and suppressed another. So, when the Prophet informed his wife of this, she said: "Who informed you of this?" The Prophet replied: "I was informed by the Omniscient and the All-Knowing God." If you two turn to God in repentance, it is only befitting for you; your hearts are already inclined to God, and if you unite against him, God is his protector, and Gabriel, and all righteous Muslims and moreover the angels also are his helpers. It may well be that he divorce you, then His Lord give him in your place, better wives than yourselves who are submissive, true in faith, obedient, penitent, devout in worship, abstinent, formerly-wedded and virgins. (3-5)

Believers! Protect yourselves and your kindred from the Fire – fuelled with men and stones – on which harsh and stern angels shall be deputed. They never disobey whatever God commands them and promptly do what they are directed to do. Disbelievers! Make no excuses today; you are only being returned what you had been doing. (6-7)

Believers! Turn to God in sincere repentance. Hopefully, your Lord will wipe away from you, your sins and admit you to gardens watered by running streams. On the Day when He will not disgrace the Prophet and those who professed faith with him. Their light will march in front of them and on their right. They will pray: "Lord, perfect our light for us and forgive us; indeed, You have power over all things." (8)

Prophet! Wage war against the disbelievers and the hypocrites, and deal sternly with them. And Hell is their abode and what an evil abode it is. (9)

God cites the example of Noah's wife and Lot's wife to the disbelievers. Both were married to two of Our righteous servants; then they betrayed them. So their husbands could in no way protect them from God and both women were ordered: "Go, you also

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and enter the Fire with those who enter it." (10)

And God cites the example of the Pharaoh's wife for the believers when she prayed: "Lord, build me a house with You in Paradise and deliver me from the Pharaoh and his deeds and deliver me from a wicked nation." And cites the example of Mary, 'Imrān's daughter, who preserved her chastity. Thus into Her We breathed Our spirit and she attested the words of her Lord and His Books, and she was among the obedient. (11-12)

Explanation

يٰٓاَيُّهَا النَّبِيُّ لِمَ تُحَرِّمُ مَآ اَحَلَّ اللّٰهُ لَكَ ۚ تَبْتَغِيْ مَرْضَاتَ اَزْوَاجِكَ ۭ وَاللّٰهُ غَفُوْرٌ رَّحِيْمٌ ۝[1]

It has been indicated in the introduction of the *sūrah* that it is not allowed for a person to be slack or compromising in fulfilling the rights of God, when he is dealing with relations for which he has natural emotions of love and sympathy; in fact, it is a requisite of this love that a person be more cautious about the accountability of these relations so that there is a possibility that they may be reformed before being judged by God. And, if they are not reformed, then at least a person will have fulfilled his responsibility before God of making the effort to reform them.

In order to delineate the above premise, the Almighty has first of all checked His Messenger for prohibiting upon himself a lawful thing merely to please and console his wives.

A little deliberation shows that no one can be more dear to God than His Messenger and his wives; however, in spite of this, the Almighty has cautioned him for a very trivial error; moreover, the motive behind this excess committed was also very noble. The purpose of this chiding by the Almighty was that it becomes evident to everyone that even the Prophet (sws) and his wives cannot be allowed to cross the bounds set by God, let alone other Muslims.

As far as the actual thing is concerned which the Prophet (sws) had forbidden upon himself to please his wives, various opinions have been reported by narrators. The most famous of these opinions is that the Prophet (sws) had consumed honey while residing with one of his wives; some of his other wives expressed their distaste for the smell of honey.[2] It is known that there are types of honey which do not have a pleasing aroma; and even if such types of honey do not exist, people who are very sensitive to aromas do not like all kinds of aromas. Women, in particular, are very sensitive in this matter. At times, they do not like wholesome and tasty food. People have diverse temperaments. Some of the wives of the Prophet (sws) also did not like honey which had the scent of *maghāfir*[3] in it. Consequently, they expressed their revulsion for it

1. O Prophet! Why do you prohibit that which God has made lawful for you to please your wives? And God is Forgiving and Merciful.

2. See, for example: Ibn Kathir, *Tafsir al-Qur'ān al-'Aẓim*, vol. 4, 388. (*Translator*)

3. This is the name of a special herb from which honey-bees extract honey; some people,

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before the Prophet (sws). Since the Prophet (sws) had a very subtle and refined disposition, and was very caring towards the feelings and emotions of the weaker sex, he promised himself to never consume honey.

In normal circumstances, this was nothing extra-ordinary, and was a very pleasing step emanating from very pious motives; however, every step taken by a Prophet of God has great importance in religion; since every deed of his is to become an example for the *ummah*, it is not permissible for him to do or say something owing to his personal inclination and for the dearest of his associations that even slightly exceeds the bounds set by God. If this is allowed, there is a strong chance that it would become a wrong example for the whole *ummah*. It is known that the Jews had prohibited the meat of the camel upon themselves merely because Jacob (sws) would not eat it for some reason. Similarly, if it would have come to the knowledge of the Muslims that the Prophet (sws) had pledged never to eat honey, seldom would a pious Muslim also not have done the same thing. For this reason, the Almighty checked the Prophet (sws), and asked him to immediately mend the situation.

The words تَبْتَغِيْ مَرْضَاتَ اَزْوَاجِكَ point to the motive of the step he took. It was essential to divulge this motive because, as explained in the introduction, the objective of this *sūrah* is to teach Muslims not to show any slackness in the accountability of their dear ones. Like hatred, love also makes a person indifferent to the limits set by God. To inform a person of this danger, the Almighty has checked His Messenger and his wives – who are the closest to Him. In this way, Muslims will realize that there is no lenience in matters of religion, for even the closest and the nearest.

Consider next the last part of the verse: وَاللّٰهُ غَفُوْرٌ رَّحِيْمٌ. Since the motive of the Prophet (sws) was very noble and he had made this decision out of sheer love and consideration for his wives, purely for his own self and never wanted to prohibit something for the *ummah*, the Almighty after correcting him on this attitude simultaneously declared that He had forgiven him for this step.

Here, it needs to be kept in consideration that there is an air of hastiness found in the declaration of forgiveness. It is as if even before delineating a directive of the *sharī'ah,* an announcement of acquittal has been made. The obvious reason for this is that the Prophet (sws) did not take this step for the reason he had been rebuked; it was taken only for his own self, as indicated before, merely to sympathize with and gratify the weaker sex; the Almighty did check him so that this step of his should not create any problems for the believers; however, He simultaneously announced His forgiveness so that this rebuke should not weigh down heavily on the Prophet (sws).

Here, readers should refresh in their minds what has often been stated in this exegesis: the lapses by prophets of God are never because they are led by their base desires; they result because these prophets exceed the limits in doing something which in itself is noble. Pleasing one's wife is not an evil thing; it is, in fact, a requisite of

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however, do not like its scent.

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decency, honour and benevolence and a requirement of human nature as well as of the *sharī'ah* revealed by the Almighty. The Qur'ān has directed man to fulfill this requirement on the condition that it remains within the bounds of the *sharī'ah.* If it exceeds these bounds, it becomes a source of trial for the Muslims, from which one must protect one self as well as others. However, when the motive of a mistake is pious, it should be checked hand in hand with forgiveness.

قَدْ فَرَضَ اللّٰهُ لَكُمْ تَحِلَّةَ اَيْمَانِكُمْ ۚ وَاللّٰهُ مَوْلٰىكُمْ ۚ وَهُوَ الْعَلِيْمُ الْحَكِيْمُ ﴿٢﴾[4]

Stated in this verse is the directive relating to a person's oath sworn to forbid something lawful to him. The previous verse was addressed to the Prophet (sws) only. This verse is addressed to all the Muslims. The reason for this is that the real purpose of checking the Prophet (sws) on this mistake was that the *ummah* should not be misled in any way by this step taken by him. Consequently, in this verse, all Muslims are addressed and directed to break their oaths sworn in forbidding upon themselves what has been allowed by the *sharī'ah*.

Stated in the words وَاللّٰهُ مَوْلٰىكُمْ is the reason why God has prohibited this: Since God is the Master of people, only He has the right to tell them what is prohibited and what is not. No one else has this right on his part, nor is it allowed to him to accept such a prerogative for others. If a person does such a thing, he will be interfering in the rights of God.

What is said above is further stressed by the words وَهُوَ الْعَلِيْمُ الْحَكِيْمُ. Since in reality, only God is the knower of all things and is wise, hence whatever He has directed His servants to is based on knowledge and wisdom. No one should be so insane as to think that he is more knowledgeable and wiser than God.

Here, a question arises: the Almighty has directed the Prophet (sws) and the believers to break such oaths; however, He has not mentioned any atonement for it; so, in this case, is no atonement to be made? The answer to this question is that the atonement of breaking an oath has already been mentioned in verse 89 of Sūrah al-Mā'idah and thus there was no need to repeat it here. Nevertheless, it is obvious from the words تَحِلَّةَ اَيْمَانِكُمْ that if a person has sworn an oath to prohibit something on himself, then he must atone for breaking such an oath; but if he has done so without swearing an oath, atonement is not necessary.

وَاِذْ اَسَرَّ النَّبِيُّ اِلٰى بَعْضِ اَزْوَاجِهٖ حَدِيْثًا ۚ فَلَمَّا نَبَّاَتْ بِهٖ وَاَظْهَرَهُ اللّٰهُ عَلَيْهِ عَرَّفَ بَعْضَهٗ وَاَعْرَضَ عَنْۢ بَعْضٍ ۚ فَلَمَّا نَبَّاَهَا بِهٖ قَالَتْ مَنْ اَنْۢبَاَكَ هٰذَا ۭ قَالَ نَبَّاَنِ الْعَلِيْمُ الْخَبِيْرُ ﴿٣﴾[5]

4. And God has made it mandatory upon you to break oaths sworn in violation of the *sharī'ah*. And God is your Master and He is Omniscient and Wise.

5. And when the Prophet confided a secret to one of his wives; so, when she disclosed it and God informed the Prophet of this, he expressed some part of it and suppressed another. So,

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In the previous verse, the Prophet (sws) was checked on an act of his; in this verse, one of his wives has been checked on a mistake. When the Prophet (sws) confided some secret to her, she divulged it to another of his wives; when later the Prophet (sws) checked her on this, instead of showing regret, she regarded this to be against her self-esteem, and the wife to whom this secret had been revealed also did not like this. Finally, the Almighty admonished both these wives to show that in matters of religion, even the wives of the Prophet (sws) are not beyond accountability.

Exegetes[6] have generally linked the incident mentioned in this verse with that of the previous one, and in this manner given it a very despicable form. However, as per linguistic principles of Arabic, it is not necessary at all that the two incidents be regarded as the same; it is, in fact, more probable that the two be distinct: the Almighty checked one of the wives of the Prophet (sws) for a misdemeanour. Here, a linguistic principle should be kept in mind: by the words وَاِذْ an independent incident is generally referred to.

The Qur'ān has not mentioned what secret was confided and to which of the wives was it confided. This secret has been kept a secret. For this reason, I do not deem it proper to go after this. Wives of the Prophet (sws) are like our mothers. It is not at all appropriate for the children to go after secrets which are between their fathers and mothers. This is so in particular, when knowing this secret has no role in understanding this verse. Here, the admonishment relates to divulging a secret, and if we start investigating this secret, it would only mean that we are doing something from which we have been stopped. However, what is very evident from this verse is that the Prophet (sws) would confide to his wives which shows that he had full trust in their ability to keep secrets and in their intellect and wisdom as well. The beauty of husband-wife relationship rests on this trust. If this trust does not exist, then the two would be leading a life devoid of higher human values.

In the section: فَلَمَّا نَبَّاَهَا بِهٖ قَالَتْ مَنْ اَنْۢبَاَكَ هٰذَا ؕ قَالَ نَبَّاَنِيَ الْعَلِيْمُ الْخَبِيْرُ a part of the discourse has been suppressed as per contextual indications: the wife to whom the Prophet (sws) had confided revealed the secret to another of his wives. Just as the wife who made this mistake is not specified, similarly it is not indicated as to which of the wives she had revealed the secret; however, this much is evident that the matter remained among the wives; it was not revealed to any other person. The exegetes have generally named 'Ā'ishah (rta) and Ḥafṣah (rta) in this regard.[7] If this view is accepted, then it becomes evident that the relations between the two of them were so cordial that they did not hide secrets from one another. This view also refutes the reports in which some

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when the Prophet informed his wife of this, she said: Who informed you of this? The Prophet replied: I was informed by the Omniscient and the All-Knowing God.

6. See, for example: Ibn Kathir, *Tafsir al-Qur'ān al-'Aẓim*, vol. 4, 388-389. (*Translator*)

7. See, for example: Ibn Kathir, *Tafsir al-Qur'ān al-'Aẓim*, vol. 4, 388. (*Translator*)

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incautious narrators have attributed jealousy and rivalry between them.

The Almighty informed the Prophet (sws) of his secret being disclosed; after that the latter chided the wife who had committed this mistake. This was essential because secrecy has a great importance in husband-wife issues. It is essential for wives to protect the secrets of their husbands. The Qur'ān has specially mentioned that pious wives are those who guard secrets: (٣٤:٤) فَالصّٰلِحٰتُ قٰنِتٰتٌ حٰفِظٰتٌ لِّلْغَيْبِ. (so, pious women are obedient [to their husbands] and keep their secrets, (4:34)). A wife is the natural trustee of her husband's secrets. If she is unfaithful in this regard, then this will only mean that the person who had been entrusted with the protection of his house has broken into it. This characteristic of faithfully guarding the secrets of the husband is essential for every wife; however, higher the rank, the more the responsibility. This responsibility on the wives of the Prophet (sws) was much more than others; for this reason, the Prophet (sws), at the behest of God, checked them so that it becomes evident to everyone that no one is beyond accountability in matters which pertain to the bounds set by God.

The words عَرَّفَ بَعْضَهٗ وَاَعْرَضَ عَنْۢ بَعْضٍ refer to a very subtle reality: the Prophet (sws) did call one of his wives to account because it was a requisite of religion; however, he did not humiliate her in this process of accountability; he revealed a few facts, and ignored some others. This mannerism was adopted by him so that his wife is admonished at her behaviour and at the same time she does not end up dejected and disheartened. In the first place, the Prophet (sws) possessed a lot of affection and sympathy for others; he would not use harsh words to scold the hypocrites and his opponents. In the second place, this matter related to the wives of the Prophet (sws) about whom it could not have been imagined that any error that emanated from them was based on any planned ill-intention. Consequently, this mistake also, as indicated before, was not of this category; it only resulted because one of the wives thought that another of the wives was also a confidant and beloved of the Prophet (sws), and so there was no harm in sharing a secret with her and that this sharing would, in fact, increase mutual trust and love. This notion was based on a noble intention, and had no element of ill-intention in it. However, an important aspect was ignored in the matter: disclosing secrets is against the character which the Almighty wants to see in the wives of His Prophet (sws) as well as in the Prophet (sws) himself. It was essential that the wives possess this lofty character because they were to be idealized by all believing women of the *ummah*. Moreover, the matter related to the Prophet (sws), who was not merely a husband; he was also a messenger of God. Because of this importance that this issue had, those involved were checked on their behavior, but the manner in which this accountability took place was not to disgrace them; rather it took place in an indirect manner through various pointers. This method of checking yields the desired results in mistakes which are not made because of ill-intention.

Here, I would rather not touch upon the actual secret referred to in this verse, the

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way our exegetes have tried to unveil it. This is firstly because it is based on narratives which are in obvious contradiction to one another; secondly, this undertaking is also against the teaching of the verse under discussion: when the Prophet (sws) himself did not like to divulge it completely, and the Almighty expressed His likeness for the manner adopted by the Prophet (sws), how can it then be the right course of action for others to try to go after the secret, especially when it pertained to the Messenger of God and his wives?

The words فَلَمَّا نَبَّاَهَا بِهٖ قَالَتْ مَنْ اَنْۢبَاَكَ هٰذَا ؕ قَالَ نَبَّاَنِیَ الْعَلِیْمُ الْخَبِیْرُ express wonder and amazement at the wife who had divulged the secret; she did not deny the happening; however, instead of realizing her mistake, she was more interested in knowing how the Prophet (sws) was informed about it. She must have thought that the wife in whom she had confided must have told him; she had grounds to believe so because she had not disclosed this secret to any one else except her. It is even possible that she might have been angry at this situation, as is indicated by the words: مَنْ اَنْۢبَاَكَ (who informed you?). If this was the case, then there was a need to be surprised about it. If a person thinks that his or her trust has been breached, he naturally feels sad. However, the Prophet (sws) clarified her misconception immediately that he was informed by the Almighty who knows all and is Omniscient. This explanation by the Prophet (sws) must have cleared the doubts of his wife, which was essential. For this reason, the Prophet (sws) did not delay the explanation.

اِنْ تَتُوْبَاۤ اِلَی اللّٰهِ فَقَدْ صَغَتْ قُلُوْبُكُمَا ۚ وَاِنْ تَظٰهَرَا عَلَیْهِ فَاِنَّ اللّٰهَ هُوَ مَوْلٰىهُ وَجِبْرِیْلُ وَصَالِحُ الْمُؤْمِنِیْنَ ۚ وَالْمَلٰٓئِكَةُ بَعْدَ ذٰلِكَ ظَهِیْرٌ ﴿۴﴾[8]

Here the question arises that it was one of the wives who had committed this mistake; so why have both been addressed in this verse, and what was the mistake the other wife had committed, on which she has been asked to repent for she was apparently innocent?

The answer to this question is that when the Prophet (sws) expressed his distaste at one of his wives for disclosing a secret, the other wife would have thought that this distaste was owing to the fact that the secret had been disclosed to her; she must have thought that after all the secret was revealed to her only and to no stranger; so why should the other wife be rebuked; this can only mean that she – to whom the secret had been divulged – has been considered an outsider. Although this notion of hers was based on an absolute misunderstanding, however, when there exists a competition for trust and love, it is not improbable for such a misunderstanding to arise.

8. If you two turn to God in repentance, it is only befitting for you; your hearts are already inclined to God, and if you unite against him, God is his protector, and Gabriel, and all righteous Muslims and moreover the angels also are his helpers.

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Nevertheless, both the wives regarded this matter to be against their self-esteem, and this feeling made them shy away a little from the Prophet (sws). In normal circumstances, this attitude was nothing extra-ordinary; such things happen every now and then between a husband and wife; however, the matter was between the Prophet (sws) and his wives. So, the Almighty sternly checked those involved so that it becomes evident to the wives that in matters of religion expression of unjustified vanity has no place. If they were at fault, they were liable more than others to reform themselves. It was only this attitude which was befitting their rank and status, and also a requisite of their faith and repentance. However, if they became stubborn and united against the Prophet (sws) in this attitude, they should remember that a Messenger of God does not depend on them for his inner-satisfaction and resolve; it is, in fact, they who are dependent on him.

Here, it needs to be kept in consideration that the attitude shown by these two wives was not driven by anger and hatred; it was driven by trust and love, or in other words, their confidence and conviction in him; however, the Qur'ān checked it with stern words. I have already indicated the reason for this in the introduction of this *sūrah*: the real teaching of this *sūrah* is that even where emotions are involved on the basis of fondness and love, it is essential to remain within the bounds stipulated by God and to fully abide by His injunctions. As a consequence of this, the wives of the Prophet (sws) should not merely regard him as their husband; they should also regard him to be a Messenger of God in all circumstances, and in all situations, specially remember this status of his because this status overshadows all others.

Our exegetes have gravely faltered in interpreting the section of verse: اِنْ تَتُوْبَآ اِلَى اللّٰهِ فَقَدْ صَغَتْ قُلُوْبُكُمَا. In their opinion, the word صَغَتْ means "to deviate" and to them the translation of the verse is: "If you repent, then this is only befitting for you because your hearts have deviated."[9]

There are many errors in this interpretation – some of which are pointed out below:

Firstly, this interpretation is totally against the linguistic principles of Arabic. The word صغو does not mean "deviation" in Arabic; on the contrary, it means "to incline and to bend towards something." My mentor, Imām ḥamīd al-Dīn Farāhī has researched into the meaning of this word in his exegesis on Sūrah al-Tahrīm. I am reproducing its relevant portion below:

> In all languages of the world in general, and in Arabic in particular, there are certain words which besides having an aggregate meaning, are also reserved for specific meanings. People who are not aware of this feature of a language are totally deprived of its understanding.[10]

9. See, for example: Ibn Kathir, *Tafsir al-Qur'ān al-'Aẓim*, vol. 4, 389. (*Translator*)
10. Farāhī, *Majmū'ah tafāsīr*, 176-177.

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After stating this principle, while citing an example of it, he writes:

For example, the word ميل, which means "to bend and to swerve" conforms to an aggregate meaning which is represented by many words in Arabic: For example: إرواء ، إنحرا ، زيغ ، جور. However, all these words mean ميل عن ألشىء (to bend away from something or to leave something). Under this aggregate meaning are also words such as صغو ، إلتفات ، توبة ، فى which mean ميل إلى ألشىء (to be inclined to or to bend towards something).

A scholar of Arabic who is aware of this essence of the word knows that the expression صَغَتْ قُلُوْبُكُمَا means أنابت قلوبكما و مالت إلى الله و رسوله (the hearts of both of you are inclined towards God and His Messenger) because the word صغو means "to bend to and to incline towards something" and not "to bend away and to swerve away from something."

This essence of the word is also found in all its derived words (*mushtaqqāt*). For example, the expression صاغية الرجل means "to follow someone's ways." Similarly, the expression صغوه معك means "He is inclined towards you." Another example is the expression: أصغيت إلى فلان. It means "You turned your ears to him." The words of a narrative are:ينفخ فى الصور فلا يسمع أحد إلا أصغى إليه (when the trumpet is blown, everyone will turn his attention towards it), An idiom reads: الصبى أعلم بمصغى خده (a child well recognizes his embrace of love). The *harrah* (cat) narrative has the words: كان يصغى لها الاناء (they would bend the utensil towards it so that it could easily drink from it). The *jawf* (inner part) of a utensil is called صغو because everything gets accumulated in it.

Ibn Barī has presented the following couplet of some poet to adduce the meaning of إصغاء سمع (to direct one's attention to someone):[11]

ترى السفيه به عن كل مكرمة

زيغ وفى إلى التشبيه إصغاء

Tara al-safihi bihi 'an kulli makrimatiṇ
Zayghuṇ, wa fi ila al-tashbihi iṣghā'uṇ

(The foolish turns away from noble and honourable things and turns his attention towards silly things.)

A poet while praising a she-camel says:[12]

11. Ibn Manzūr, *Lisān al-'arab*, vol. 14, 461.
12. Ibid. vol, 14, 461.

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تصغی اذا شدّها بالکور جانحة

حتی اذا ما استوی فی غرزها تثب

Tuṣghi idhā shaddahā bi al-kūri jāniḥataṇ
Ḥattā idhā mā istawā fi gharziha tathibu

(When he tightens the saddle on it, she turns her neck to become attentive, and when he puts his feet in the stirrup, she leaps forward.)

A'shā while mentioning the eye of his bitch says:[13]

تری عینها صغواء فی جنب غرزها

تراقب کفی والقطیع المحرما

Tara 'aynahā ṣghwā'ā fi janbi gharzihā
Turāqibu kaffi wa al-qaṭi'a al-muharramā

(Her eye is bent towards its edge while she looks at my hand and brutal lash.)

Namr ibn Tawlab has used the idiom إصغاء أناء in a specific connotation; however, even then the real essence of the word is found in it:[14]

وان ابن اخت القوم مصغی اناؤه

اذا لم یزاحم خاله

Wa inna ibna ukhti al-qawmi muṣghaṇ inā'uhū
idhā lam yuzāḥim khalahū bi abiṇ jaldi

(And the rights of the nations' nephew are violated, if he does not counter the onslaught of his uncles through a brave father.)[15]

After citing these idioms and couplets from the *Lisān al-'arab*, Imām Farāhī writes with deep emotional feelings:

For the seekers of the truth, these testimonies should be enough; they would be enough to satisfy them, and will not be influenced by the poisonous content injected by the fabricators in historical narratives; when such elements were not

13. Ibid., vol. 12, 126.
14. Ibid., vol. 4, 409.
15. Farāhī, *Majmū'ah tafāsīr*, 177-178.

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able to alter the words of the Book of God, they went after distorting its meanings and translated the word صغو as زیغ (deviation) even though there is a world of difference between the two. The recital زاغت reported in certain narratives is not even worth paying attention to.[16]

Secondly, if the implied meaning was what the exegetes have interpreted: "if you repent because your hearts have deviated," this style adopted by the Qur'ān is totally inappropriate. After citing numerous examples of the occurrence of قَدْ after the conditional إِن (as is the case in this verse) from the Qur'ān and classical Arabic poetry, Imām Farāhī has explained it thus:

If you reflect on these examples, you will realize that in this style, the sentence which comes after قَدْ states the ease and comfort of what is stated after إِنْ. If the suppressions in the discourse are unfolded, it would read thus: "if such and such thing happens, then there is no problem or there is no wonder or this is something very ordinary because such and such thing has happened." In the light of this detail, the verse would mean: "if, in order to please the Prophet (sws), you repent before God, then this is precisely what is expected from you, because your hearts are already inclined to Him."[17]

Thirdly, the pious wives have been labelled with the sin of having warped and twisted hearts, even though the nature of the incident, which I have described earlier in the light of the words of the Qur'ān clearly shows that there was not a semblance of any malafide intent involved and whatever happened, happened because of sincerity and mutual trust and affection: the Prophet (sws) confided a matter to one of the wives, who disclosed it to another of his wives out of sheer affection for her. When the Almighty informed the Prophet (sws) of this matter, he checked the wife who was guilty of this disclosure; however, she did not give due importance to this chiding of the Prophet (sws) and reckoned that if she had disclosed a matter relating to her husband to another of his trusted and beloved wives, then this was not a mistake that called for such accountability. Moreover, when, because of this attitude, the Prophet (sws) became reserved with her, she too, owing to her love for him, was put off from him because of her trust in him and the wife to whom she had disclosed the secret also supported her. As referred to above, the two felt slightly humiliated that they had been rebuked for something that had been disclosed to them; it is but natural for such sentiments of self-esteem to arise in the wives of noble families.

Here, one should also keep in consideration the psychological reality that when a person is angry because of his or her love for another person, then this anger is only

16. Ibid., 178.
17. Ibid., 179.

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superficial and concealed in it is an intense desire to be united again. Same was the case here. Both wives outwardly distanced themselves from the Prophet (sws), but in their hearts greatly desired that if the Prophet (sws) expressed even a slight inclination towards them, they would give up feigning anger. However, the Prophet (sws) could not show any flexibility in his stance because, as explained earlier, he was to teach his household that even with his near ones he must give priority to the directives of God and His Messenger. It was the wives who were left with no choice but to give up their unjustified self-esteem in this matter. However, the fetters of love and trust are very gripping. In spite of wanting something to happen that ended this embargo, they remained hesitant in taking the initiative. The Qur'ān has pointed to this internal conflict within them by the words اِنْ تَتُوْبَآ اِلَى اللّٰهِ فَقَدْ صَغَتْ قُلُوْبُكُمَا in a very effective way. Alas! Our exegetes were unable to understand this, and erroneously regarded this inclination of the hearts to be deviation of the hearts.

Consider now, the next part of the verse: وَاِنْ تَظٰهَرَا عَلَيْهِ فَاِنَّ اللّٰهَ هُوَ مَوْلٰىهُ وَجِبْرِيْلُ وَصَالِحُ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ ۚ وَالْمَلٰٓئِكَةُ بَعْدَ ذٰلِكَ ظَهِيْرٌ. The word تَظٰهَرَا means "to become the helpers and supporters of one another." The preposition عَلَى after it has incorporated in it the meaning of uniting against the Prophet (sws). I have already explained earlier the nature of this "united front" and its cause: it was not an expression of clash; it was only an expression of trust and fond affection. They thought that in this matter they had a right to express their self-regard. At that time, they did not realize the fact that in matters of religion no one is beyond accountability, not even the Messenger of God.

Here, it needs to be kept in mind that as per the more famed narratives, the two wives referred to here are 'Ā'ishah (rta) and Ḥafṣah (rta) about whom we get an impression from some narratives recorded in exegetical works that the two were jealous of one another in the way two rival wives normally are. However, their characters depicted in these verses clearly present an indubitable testimony that they so deeply loved one another that they would even share secrets about their husband, and at times, in sympathy for one another, would shy away from their husband.

Though the verse addresses only these two wives, yet the admonition present in it relates to all the pious wives. They are told that if they shy away from the Prophet (sws), it is not that he would suffer from the loss of their company; the affection the Prophet (sws) has for them is secondary; His real association is with God Who is his Lord and Master. After Him, Gabriel, who brings revelations, is his friend and associate and after him the righteous among the believers occupy this position – believers who are the real worthy recipients of his attention and instruction. To add to this noble group are the angels of God who accompany and support him in every hardship.

The implication of this section of the verse is that the wives of the Prophet (sws), while dealing with him, must realize the great difference there was between an ordinary husband and that of a husband who was a Messenger of God. They should honour the time he was able to give them from his hectic involvements, and should

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not think that as the Prophet (sws) was in need of their love and companionship, he would always pamper them; he would pamper them only to the extent possible in the limits set by God. If these limits were even slightly exceeded, it was his obligation to hold them accountable for this, and it would not be befitting for him to show any slackness in this duty.

عَسٰى رَبُّهٗۤ اِنۡ طَلَّقَكُنَّ اَنۡ يُّبۡدِلَهٗۤ اَزۡوَاجًا خَيۡرًا مِّنۡكُنَّ مُسۡلِمٰتٍ مُّؤۡمِنٰتٍ قٰنِتٰتٍ تٰٓئِبٰتٍ عٰبِدٰتٍ سٰٓئِحٰتٍ ثَيِّبٰتٍ وَّ اَبۡكَارًا ﴿۵﴾[18]

Expressed in this verse is the same topic as the previous verse, albeit in a more stern manner viz a viz the requirement of accountability. The pious wives are addressed and told that they should not think that if they shy away from the Prophet (sws), then he would be deprived of the support of close ones. Just as today the Almighty has selected them for his companionship, he can select better wives than them for this purpose if the Prophet (sws) divorces them, and these wives will have all the qualities they are required to have. The qualities enumerated here have all been discussed at other places in the Qur'ān, specially in verse 25 of Sūrah al-Aḥzāb. Readers are advised to look up the explanation of that verse. Its repetition here will only unnecessarily add more pages.

The real purpose of mentioning the word ثَيِّبٰتٌ (formerly-wedded) after اِبۡكَارًا (virgins) is that to God the real value of a person lies in his or her high moral character. Being formerly-wedded or being a virgin is a secondary thing. If a lady has a high moral character, then married ladies hold more importance than virgins, as is evident by their prior mention in the verse.

The word سٰٓئِحٰتٌ has generally been translated as "fasting women." In my opinion, this is an inaccurate translation. This actually refers to سیاحت (*siyāhat*), a religious term, which has a broad meaning. I have already mentioned in detail my research about this word in verse 112 of Sūrah al-Tawbah. Its essence is ascetism and forsaking worldly pleasures. Thus it refers to rituals which depict this, and include the fast, the *i'tikāf* and the *ḥajj* etc. It is in fact a ritual of worship of the category of monasticism (*rahbaniyyah*). Just as monasticism is acceptable in Islam to a particular extent, similarly *siyāḥat* is also acceptable to a certain extent. The fast, no doubt, is an important ingredient of it; however, confining the translation of the word to it would thus be incorrect. I have translated this world as abstinent, which is relatively more comprehensive and includes all rituals which have this spirit. This of course includes the fast.

While reading this verse, it should be kept in mind that in it the wives of the Prophet (sws) have been called to account – wives whose piety and purity was indubitable, and wives who were superior to all women of the world. Such noble souls have been threatened by divorce merely because they were slightly careless in a matter instructed

18. It may well be that he divorce you, then His Lord give him in your place better wives than yourselves, who are submissive, true in faith, obedient, penitent, devout in worship, abstinent, formerly-wedded and virgins.

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by the Prophet (sws), and that too, not because of any antagonism or arrogance but because of love and trust. One can only imagine from this the status accountability occupies in Islam. In other words, it is this accountability which is the basis of establishing ties and severing them: love, which is devoid of accountability, is not love; it is bait thrown by Satan. The real beauty of the love of believers is that it is subservient to the limits set by God. In such matters, they are never careless about one another; in fact, the more they love a person, the more are they vigilant in their accountability because this is the requisite of true love. When they see that no place remains in the hearts for their words of counsel and affection, they feel no hesitation in breaking ties with them, because once the spiritual relationship is broken, material relationship occupies no significance in their eyes.

يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا قُوْٓا اَنْفُسَكُمْ وَاَهْلِيْكُمْ نَارًا وَّقُوْدُهَا النَّاسُ وَالْحِجَارَةُ عَلَيْهَا مَلٰٓئِكَةٌ غِلَاظٌ شِدَادٌ لَّا يَعْصُوْنَ اللّٰهَ مَآ اَمَرَهُمْ وَيَفْعَلُوْنَ مَا يُؤْمَرُوْنَ ۝[19]

After the Prophet (sws) and his wives were called to account in the previous verses, the common believers are also cautioned and reminded. The message sounded to them is loud and clear: they have seen that even the Prophet (sws) and his wives are not beyond accountability, let alone others. It is the duty of every person to do whatever he can to protect himself and his family from fire. Whenever he sees any deviation on their part regarding the directives of God, he should try to check it as soon as possible; he should not worry whether this would weigh down heavily on them or not, and whether, as a result, he might have to bear their displeasure and aversion. Bearing this displeasure is much less bothersome, than letting them creep to the path that leads to Hell. If he is not vigilant in this regard, then he himself will also be held accountable for them, as per the narrative: اَلَا كُلُّكُمْ رَاعٍ وَكُلُّكُمْ مَسْؤُوْلٌ عَنْ رَعِيَّتِهٖ (beware that each of you is a shepherd, and each person will be held accountable for his herd).[20]

The words وَقُوْدُهَا النَّاسُ وَالْحِجَارَةُ reflect the nature of the fire: its fuel is people and stones. With this fuel, it will blaze in its true form. The people referred to here are obviously those who did not purify themselves in this world, and remained contaminated with the filth of their sins. They never obeyed the *sharī'ah* revealed by the Almighty so that they could become purified souls.

The stones mentioned here, as has been explained in the verse 23 verse of Sūrah al-Baqarah earlier, are ones which were given the status of deities and were worshipped in this world as such, and hence were a symbol of idolatry. It is to burn such objects

19. Believers! Protect yourselves and your kindred from the Fire – fuelled with men and stones – on which harsh and stern angels shall be deputed. They never disobey whatever God commands them and promptly do what they are directed to do.

20. Muslim, *Al-Jāmi' al-ṣaḥih*, vol. 3, 1459, (no. 1829).

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that this fire of Hell has been prepared. When it will receive this fuel, it will be as if it received its most cherished food. It will gulp each and everything while declaring: هَلْ مِنْ مَّزِيْدٍ (٣٠:٥٠) (is there more? (50:30)) and will do as is expressed thus: لَا تُبْقِيْ وَلَا تَذَرُ (٧٤:٢٧) (it will neither show mercy nor spare anyone, (74:28)).

The words عَلَيْهَا مَلٰٓئِكَةٌ غِلَاظٌ شِدَادٌ لَّا يَعْصُوْنَ اللّٰهَ مَآ اَمَرَهُمْ وَيَفْعَلُوْنَ مَا يُؤْمَرُوْنَ are a veiled reference to people who regard checking their family members on the greatest of mistakes to be contrary to the love and affection they have for them. The implication of these words is that if today love is stopping people from holding their family accountable for faults, then they should remember that the angels deputed on Hell have no love and regard for such people; these angels are very harsh and stern; it is better that before they are encountered, people through accountability should try, if they can, to save their own selves as well as their family from the clasp of this punishment.

The implication of the part لَا يَعْصُوْنَ اللّٰهَ مَآ اَمَرَهُمْ وَيَفْعَلُوْنَ مَا يُؤْمَرُوْنَ is that if today people are being asked to do accountability, and this directive is weighing heavily on them, then let it be so, for it will not weigh down heavily on the keepers of Hell. They will never disobey God in any of His directives, and will fully comply to what He asks them to do.

يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا لَا تَعْتَذِرُوا الْيَوْمَ ۭ اِنَّمَا تُجْزَوْنَ مَا كُنْتُمْ تَعْمَلُوْنَ ۝[21]

If people will try to make any excuses on the Day of Judgment, they will be told that they are only reaping what they had sown. They will now taste the consequences of what they did in the previous world; it is not that the crimes of others have been inserted in their record of deeds; the result of their own deeds is being shown to them; so, creating a clatter in this situation will be of no use to them; if they could have done something to save themselves from this punishment, it was in the previous world; they have no choice now.

يٰٓاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا تُوْبُوْٓا اِلَى اللّٰهِ تَوْبَةً نَّصُوْحًا ۭ عَسٰى رَبُّكُمْ اَنْ يُّكَفِّرَ عَنْكُمْ سَيِّاٰتِكُمْ وَيُدْخِلَكُمْ جَنّٰتٍ تَجْرِيْ مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْاَنْهٰرُ ۙ يَوْمَ لَا يُخْزِي اللّٰهُ النَّبِيَّ وَالَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا مَعَهٗ ۚ نُوْرُهُمْ يَسْعٰى بَيْنَ اَيْدِيْهِمْ وَبِاَيْمَانِهِمْ يَقُوْلُوْنَ رَبَّنَآ اَتْمِمْ لَنَا نُوْرَنَا وَاغْفِرْ لَنَا ۚ اِنَّكَ عَلٰي كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيْرٌ ۝[22]

After the appeal sounded in the previous verse, in this verse all believers are called

21. Disbelievers! Make no excuses today; you are only being returned what you had been doing.

22. Believers! Turn to God in sincere repentance. Hopefully, your Lord will wipe away from you your sins and admit you to gardens watered by running streams. On the Day when He will not disgrace the Prophet and those who professed faith with him. Their light will march in front of them and on their right. They will pray: Lord, perfect our light for us and forgive us; indeed, You have power over all things.

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upon to repent on their sins and to turn to God in sincerity and shun indifference to the truth.

Sincere repentance is that which is done with full humility of the heart and with true resolve and after which a person has no desire to turn towards sin, and after permanently divorcing sin, he earnestly presents himself before God.

I have already explained somewhere in this exegesis that when the word تَابَ is addressed by God to His creation, then it connotes a promise and glad tidings from Him on the condition that a person proves himself worthy of these.

The word يَوْمَ in يَوْمَ لَا يُخْزِى اللّٰهُ النَّبِيَّ وَالَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا مَعَهٗ can be regarded as the locus (*ẓarf*) of the verb or some other verb can be regarded to be suppressed before it. On that Day, the Almighty will not humiliate the Prophet (sws) and his companions who were believers because they had already adopted those people as their own companions in the previous world whom they filtered out through the sieve of accountability and who had purified themselves from the filth of polytheism and disbelief, and were very sincere. These people will not be the ones who themselves led hypocritical lives, and because of their weak and compromising attitude led their family and other relations to hypocrisy. Such people will be humiliated on the Day of Judgement, because on that day they will be engulfed by the darkness of their hypocrisy, while, on the other hand, the Prophet (sws) and his Companions (rta) would be advancing to their destination and their path would be lit up with the radiance of their faith and sincerity.

The last part of the verse: نُوْرُهُمْ يَسْعٰى بَيْنَ اَيْدِيْهِمْ وَبِاَيْمَانِهِمْ يَقُوْلُوْنَ رَبَّنَآ اَتْمِمْ لَنَا نُوْرَنَا وَاغْفِرْ لَنَا ۚ اِنَّكَ عَلٰى كُلِّ شَىْءٍ قَدِيْرٌ refers to the success and triumph of the Prophet (sws) and his Companions (rta). On that Day, everyone will be wandering in darkness; however, the Prophet (sws) and his Companions (rta) will be guided by a light which will be in front of them and on their right side, and they will be praying to God to perfect their light, and to forgive them because He has power over all things.

The light mentioned here is also referred to in Sūrah al-Ḥadīd earlier. There also, people who will be humiliated are alluded to:

يَوْمَ تَرَى الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ وَالْمُؤْمِنٰتِ يَسْعٰى نُوْرُهُمْ بَيْنَ اَيْدِيْهِمْ وَبِاَيْمَانِهِمْ بُشْرٰىكُمُ الْيَوْمَ جَنّٰتٌ تَجْرِىْ مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْاَنْهٰرُ خٰلِدِيْنَ فِيْهَا ۭ ذٰلِكَ هُوَ الْفَوْزُ الْعَظِيْمُ. يَوْمَ يَقُوْلُ الْمُنٰفِقُوْنَ وَالْمُنٰفِقٰتُ لِلَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوا انْظُرُوْنَا نَقْتَبِسْ مِنْ نُّوْرِكُمْ ۚ قِيْلَ ارْجِعُوْا وَرَآءَكُمْ فَالْتَمِسُوْا نُوْرًا ۭ فَضُرِبَ بَيْنَهُمْ بِسُوْرٍ لَّهٗ بَابٌ ۭ بَاطِنُهٗ فِيْهِ الرَّحْمَةُ وَظَاهِرُهٗ مِنْ قِبَلِهِ الْعَذَابُ. يُنَادُوْنَهُمْ اَلَمْ نَكُنْ مَّعَكُمْ ۭ قَالُوْا بَلٰى وَلٰكِنَّكُمْ فَتَنْتُمْ اَنْفُسَكُمْ وَتَرَبَّصْتُمْ وَارْتَبْتُمْ وَغَرَّتْكُمُ الْاَمَانِيُّ حَتّٰى جَاۗءَ اَمْرُ اللّٰهِ وَغَرَّكُمْ بِاللّٰهِ الْغَرُوْرُ. (٥٧: ١٢-١٤)

On the Day when you shall see believing men and believing women, with their light shining before them and on their right. They would be given the glad tidings: "Rejoice this day for you shall enter gardens watered by running streams in which

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you shall abide for ever." This is the supreme success. On the day when hypocrites, both men and women, will say to the believers: "Please give us that chance to benefit from your light." But they will be told: "Go back, and seek some other light there!" Then a wall with a gate shall be set before them. Inside it shall be mercy, and outside it will be torment. These hypocrites will cry out to them: "Were we not with you?" "Yes," they will reply, "but you tempted yourselves, you waited, you doubted, and were deceived by desires until the decision of God arrived and Satan deceived you about God." (57:12-14)

The words رَبَّنَآ اَتۡمِمۡ لَنَا نُوۡرَنَا وَاغۡفِرۡ لَنَا ۚ اِنَّكَ عَلٰى كُلِّ شَىۡءٍ قَدِيۡرٌ refer to the fact that this light shall be shown to these people before they enter Paradise in order to guide them to it. At that time, there will be darkness around them, except on their front and on their right. For this reason, these people, while showing deep gratitude on this favour of the Almighty, will pray to Him to complete their light, and to forgive them. Obviously, when they will be given the light to guide them, while they would be treading the path leading to Paradise, this will also induce in them the expectation that the Almighty will bless them with His forgiveness, and that will be the time when this light will manifest itself completely. Thus, they will pray that this expectation of theirs is fulfilled.

The words اِنَّكَ عَلٰى كُلِّ شَىۡءٍ قَدِيۡرٌ uttered by these people will be an expression of the fact that though they did believe that God had power over all things, they had now seen this with their own eyes that this is indeed so.

يٰٓاَيُّهَا النَّبِىُّ جَاهِدِ الۡكُفَّارَ وَالۡمُنٰفِقِيۡنَ وَاغۡلُظۡ عَلَيۡهِمۡ ؕ وَمَاۡوٰٮهُمۡ جَهَنَّمُ ؕ وَبِئۡسَ الۡمَصِيۡرُ ۝[23]

After the accountability of the believers and the near ones, it is stressed upon the Prophet (sws) to be vigilant in this divinely-bestowed responsibility of accountability. The *jihād* mentioned in the verse relates both to the sword and the tongue; however, both have their own sphere. The sword was to be used against people to whom the truth had been communicated in such a conclusive manner that they were left with no excuse to deny it, and had come out as its open enemies. Details of this *jihād* can be seen in the previous *sūrahs*. On the other hand, people who seemingly claimed to profess faith but evaded its requisites were to face verbal accountability. At this juncture, the tone of this accountability was not to be soft; it was directed to be carried out in a stern manner.

The reason because of which the Prophet (sws) had been asked to be stern is that whenever he would check the hypocrites on their mistakes, he would be very soft because of his graciousness so that they did not feel humiliated. These people should

23. Prophet! Wage war against the disbelievers and the hypocrites, and deal sternly with them. And Hell is their abode and what an evil abode it is.

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have valued this gracious attitude of the Prophet (sws); however, since they did not deserve this graciousness, instead of benefitting from it, they became audacious enough to think that they were succeeding in deceiving the Prophet (sws). For this reason, the Almighty directed him to change his tone, and asked him to be stern and unyielding in calling them to account for their misdeeds so that these people take heed and if they wanted, they could reform themselves or at least be left with no excuse. I have already explained this subject in the verse 3 of Sūrah al-Tawbah. Those interested can look it up.

The words وَ مَاۡوٰىهُمۡ جَهَنَّمُ ؕ وَ بِئۡسَ الۡمَصِيۡرُ direct the Prophet (sws) to fully caution and remind these people that if they did not change their attitude, they should remember that Hell would be their abode which no doubt is the worst of all abodes.

ضَرَبَ اللّٰهُ مَثَلًا لِّلَّذِيۡنَ كَفَرُوا امۡرَاَتَ نُوۡحٍ وَّ امۡرَاَتَ لُوۡطٍ ؕ كَانَتَا تَحۡتَ عَبۡدَيۡنِ مِنۡ عِبَادِنَا صَالِحَيۡنِ فَخَانَتٰهُمَا فَلَمۡ يُغۡنِيَا عَنۡهُمَا مِنَ اللّٰهِ شَيۡـًٔا وَّ قِيۡلَ ادۡخُلَا النَّارَ مَعَ الدّٰخِلِيۡنَ ﴿۱۰﴾[24]

Here at the end, examples are cited to show that what will benefit a person before God is his own deeds. Those who will not bring the treasure of good deeds with them to God will not be able to benefit from being related to the noblest of people.

The examples of the wives of Noah (sws) and Lot (sws) have been presented here as a general counsel for the addressees of this verse and thus the words: ضَرَبَ اللّٰهُ مَثَلًا لِّلَّذِيۡنَ كَفَرُوا (God cites the example of Noah's wife and Lot's wife to the disbelievers). These examples are related in a very general manner to the incidents concerning the pious wives of the Prophet (sws) mentioned at the beginning of the *sūrah*. It is not correct to construe that these examples have some special relation to those incidents. The greatest thing which contributed to the indifference of people, especially religious people, regarding accountability in the Hereafter was their wrong notion that since they were the descendents of the favoured ones of God, the fire of Hell would not touch them. The Jews and Christians were devastated because they were inflicted with this wrong notion, and now the Muslims were following their footsteps.

The word خَانَتَ (betrayal) is used for both women. It is very obvious that these ladies were not faithful to their husbands as far as being their confidants was concerned; however, it does not necessarily mean that they were besmeared with profligacy and licentiousness. The Almighty protects His prophets from such filth. It is mentioned in narratives that the wife of Lot (sws) would inform the ruffians of his nation whenever he would receive guests. These misdeeds have been called acts of betrayal by the Qur'ān.

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24. God cites the example of Noah's wife and Lot's wife to the disbelievers. Both were married to two of Our righteous servants; then they betrayed them. So their husbands could in no way protect them from God and both women were told: go you also and enter the Fire with those who enter it.

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وَضَرَبَ اللّٰهُ مَثَلًا لِّلَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوا امْرَاَتَ فِرْعَوْنَ ۘ اِذْ قَالَتْ رَبِّ ابْنِ لِيْ عِنْدَكَ بَيْتًا فِي الْجَنَّةِ وَنَجِّنِيْ مِنْ فِرْعَوْنَ وَعَمَلِهٖ وَنَجِّنِيْ مِنَ الْقَوْمِ الظّٰلِمِيْنَ ﴿١١﴾[25]

This example is meant to teach Muslims the fact that even in the worst of circumstances it is essential that they protect their faith. If, in these circumstances, a Muslim is living luxuriously, it is a requisite of his faith that if he feels that this atmosphere is detrimental to his faith and is a place of torment for him, he should protect his faith by bearing every hardship. Although the wife of the Pharaoh was the queen and lived in a palace, she still prayed to God to grant her a house in Paradise, and to rid her of the Pharaoh and his evil and from his wicked people. It is obvious from this that she felt that she was living in a place of torment because the whole environment was replete with sin and oppression. A believer, whether man or woman, should never breathe in satisfaction in such an environment, even though he or she in these circumstances is living in a palace.

It is evident from the words وَنَجِّنِيْ مِنْ فِرْعَوْنَ وَعَمَلِهٖ وَنَجِّنِيْ مِنَ الْقَوْمِ الظّٰلِمِيْنَ that she was fully aware of the fact that if a person is living prosperously in an evil atmosphere and is not directly involved in the sins and excesses committed in it, even then he cannot protect himself from its foul effects. In order to be shielded from such effects, it is essential that he show abhorrence and detestation to them, and whenever possible should run away from it.

وَمَرْيَمَ ابْنَتَ عِمْرٰنَ الَّتِيْٓ اَحْصَنَتْ فَرْجَهَا فَنَفَخْنَا فِيْهِ مِنْ رُّوْحِنَا وَصَدَّقَتْ بِكَلِمٰتِ رَبِّهَا وَكُتُبِهٖ وَكَانَتْ مِنَ الْقٰنِتِيْنَ ﴿١٢﴾[26]

Here, at the end, the example of Mary (sws) is cited: although she was born in an evil environment, through sheer attention, devotion, hard-work and worship she attained a unique status in the eyes of God.

At the time she was born, the Israelites were slaves to the Romans. The extent of moral decadence they had plunged into at that time can be seen from the extent to which John (sws) and later Jesus (sws) censured them. Moreover, the character displayed by the Israelites can also be gauged from the attitude they adopted with these two prophets and other righteous people. It was as a result of this attitude that the Almighty cursed them forever. It is in these decadent circumstances that Mary (sws) was born; she never received any support worthy of mention from her past, however, even in her childhood she greatly moved the prophet Zachariyyā (sws), her

25. And God cites the example of the Pharaoh's wife for the believers when she prayed: "Lord, build me a house with You in Paradise and deliver me from the Pharaoh and his deeds and deliver me from a wicked nation."

26. And cites the example of Mary, 'Imrān's daughter, who preserved her chastity. Thus into her We breathed Our spirit and she attested the words of her Lord and His Books, and she was among the obedient.

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maternal aunt's husband, when he would visit her in the Bayt al-Maqdis where she would be stationed for worship. He would be full of praise when he felt her spiritual achievements. It was these achievements which impressed him so much that he prayed to God to bless him with such a son. Later, his prayer was accepted by God when he became father to the prophet John (sws).

Mary (sws) is an eternally living example that if a person is sincerely devoted to God, then even in the worst of circumstances, she can even make herself enviable for the angels. Thus, the Almighty found her worthy of being entrusted with a great treasure, and in order to protect her honour from calumny and false allegations, He blessed her with such majesty which did not manifest itself for any other person of this world.

The words الَّتِيْٓ اَحْصَنَتْ فَرْجَهَا فَنَفَخْنَا فِيْهِ مِنْ رُّوْحِنَا refer to her real achievement because of which she proved herself worthy of being entrusted with a great thing from God. The word فرج is not used in Arabic in a limited meaning. It means "places of fear." It includes in it all those ways from which sin can infiltrate in a person. In the Qur'ān, this word is used for both men and women. The expression اَحْصَنَتْ فَرْجَهَا means that she completely guarded all parts of her body through which some sin could creep into it; the Almighty rewarded her for this by blowing His spirit into her, and in the form of Jesus (sws), a great sign of God emerged from her womb.

After a mention of this special characteristic of Mary (sws), the words وَصَدَّقَتْ بِكَلِمٰتِ رَبِّهَا وَكُتُبِهٖ وَكَانَتْ مِنَ الْقٰنِتِيْنَ point to the blessings her faith reaped: she complied without any hesitation whatsoever with every directive the Almighty gave her; similarly, she also adhered to the teaching of divine scriptures. She would remember God at every instant, because of which she was able to adhere to the directives of God with full attention even during the hardest of trials.

A point specially worth noting here is that examples of women have been cited not only in matters of virtue but also in those of vice. The purpose is to negate the notion that the fountainhead of all vices is a woman. The truth is that as per her creation, she too, has good and bad abilities. If she does not use her freedom of will in the right manner, she can become the worst of companions to the best of people, and if she tastes the sweetness of faith and obedience, she is like a houri of Paradise in the most evil of environments.

By the grace of God, I come to the end of this *sūrah's* exegesis. فَالْحَمْدُ لِلّٰهِ عَلٰى فضله وإحسانه (gratitude be to God for His blessings and favour).

Raḥmānābād,
6th June, 1978 AD
28th Jumadī al-Thānī, 1398 AH

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Tadabbur i Qur’ān

Sūrah al-Mulk (67)

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Surah al-Mulk

A Brief Analysis of the *Sūrahs* of the Seventh Group

With Sūrah al-Mulk begins the seventh and last group of the Qur'ān. The *sūrahs* of this group too are arranged in the same manner as they are arranged in the previous ones. The Makkan Sūrahs precede the few Madīnan Sūrahs. The latter is related to the former as a branch is related to its stem.

There is a difference in opinion regarding the Makkan or Madīnan identity of some *sūrahs*. It is thus difficult to say beforehand where the former end and the latter begin. It is only after the analysis of all these *sūrahs* that a definite opinion can be given in this regard. However, my preliminary opinion is that forty three *sūrahs* from Sūrah al-Mulk to Sūrah al-Kāfirūn are Makkan and the rest from Sūrah al-Nāṣr to Sūrah al-Nās are Madīnan.

Like all the previous groups, in this group also the fundamentals of the Qur'ānic message: monotheism, prophethood and the hereafter have been discussed, and there exists a mention of all the phases of preaching in it. However, the real subject matter of the whole group is *indhār* (warning). Most *sūrahs* of this group belong to the early Makkan period, and the style of *indhār* adopted in them is the same as was adopted by Muḥammad (sws) atop the hillock of Ṣafā. As a requisite of this *indhār*, a portrayal of the events of the Day of Judgement is made in this group; the punishment which necessarily comes as a result of rejecting a Messenger of God is depicted in such a maner as if the Quraysh can see it from their own eyes. The arguments used are based on established facts of history and manifest signs found in the worlds within man and the one around him. The force in the discourse is like the roar of thunder and the bolt of lightning that shakes and jolts everyone.

Such was the upheaval caused by these *sūrahs* in the whole of Arabia that not a single person remained neutral about the message of the Qur'ān: he either became its great enemy or its great advocate; finally, the clash that took place between these two categories of people culminated in the dominance of the truth which is mentioned at the end of every group, and is also mentioned at the end of this group.

While beginning the exegesis of the seventh group, I would like to cite the following verse of Sūrah al-Ḥijr: (۸۷:۱۵) وَلَقَدْ اٰتَيْنٰكَ سَبْعًا مِّنَ الْمَثَانِيْ وَالْقُرْاٰنَ الْعَظِيْمَ. (and [O Prophet!] We have bestowed upon you seven *mathānī* which is this great Qur'ān, (15:87)). I had mentioned this in the foreword of this exegesis after introducing the seven groups. The purpose was to show that this division into seven groups is

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sanctioned by the Qur'ān itself. Then, while explaining the above verse in the exegesis of Sūrah al-Ḥijr, I had tried to substantiate the following premises:

Firstly, the Qur'ān has not called any specific *sūrah* as the *sab' mathāni*. In fact, the words كِتٰبًا مُّتَشَابِهًا مَّثَانِيَ (٣٩:٢٣) show that the whole of the Qur'ān is *sab' mathānī*.

Secondly, the word *mathānī* does not refer to something which is often repeated; it refers to something which occurs in pairs.

Thirdly, it is evident from the arrangement of the *sūrahs* in the Qur'ān that they are divided into seven groups and *sūrahs* occur in pairs towards which I have been continuously alluding in this exegesis.

A reminder of the above points here is meant to convey to the reader that he can now judge whether what is said in these points holds water or not and whether new frontiers of knowledge have opened as a result of this arrangement of the Qur'ān or not.

In my opinion, it is to this arrangement of the Qur'ān that the following narrative of 'Abdullāh Ibn Mas'ūd (rta) reported from the Prophet (sws) points to: أنزل القرآن على سبعة أحرف (the Qur'ān has been recealed on seven *ahruf*).[1] If the expression seven *aḥruf* is interpreted to mean that all the words of the Qur'ān can be read in seven ways, then this is an obviously wrong interpretation. In this case, the Qur'ān would become an enigma, even though as per its own words it is revealed in lucid Arabic, and the pure language of the Quraysh. Even people who give importance to variant readings cannot claim that a word of the Qur'ān has been read in seven ways. Ibn Jarīr has generously quoted variant readings, yet I do not remember him quoting more than two or three readings of a word.

Further deliberation shows that difference in readings is not in fact a difference in readings; most of it relates to difference in interpretation. At times, an early authority has used a word to explain a Qur'ānic word, and this explanatory word itself came to be regarded as a variant reading of the original word. It was clear that this word was not a new reading of the word; it was only meant to explain it. In the previous *sūrah*, it has been indicated that some people read فَقَدْ صَغَتْ as فَقَدْ زَاغَتْ. It is obvious that whoever did so was not informing us of a new variant of the word; he was only telling the meaning of فَقَدْ صَغَتْ. Incidentally, I have also shown in the light of ancient classical Arabic literature how wrong this meaning is.

Another thing which needs to be kept in mind is that even if there are variant readings, the *mutawātir* reading is only that which is found with people and written in all the codices found with the *ummah*. Obviously, all other readngs are not not *mutawātir* and are *shādh* (rare), and cannot be given importance to, in the presence of the *mutawātir* reading. For this reason, I have not entertained variant readings while

1. Abū Ya'lā Aḥmad ibn 'Ali ibn Muthannā ibn Yaḥyā ak-Mawṣili, *Musnad*. 1st ed. vol. 9 (Damascus: Dār al-mā'mūn li al-turāth, 1984), 278.

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writing this exegesis, and have adopted the reading of the *muṣḥaf*. At no place did I need to artificially adjust an interpretation; at all places a very clear and lucid interpretation in the light of the context and parallels of the Qur'ān came to surface which was the real objective. Entertaining variant readings would only mean that we are inviting those doubts to find root in us which Abū Bakr (rta) and 'Umar (rta) had long ago rid us of forever.

Nevertheless, there is no reason to interpret the narrative of seven *ahruf* as seven readings; however if the word *ḥarf* (singular of *aḥruf*) is interpreted as "a writing, a discourse or a style," which has full sanction from lexicons as well as usage, then the narrative would mean that the Qur'ān has been revealed on seven styles or seven writings, and this would indeed be a reference to the seven groups which every reader of the Qur'ān can clearly see in it.

I have already explained the nature of these groups. In each of them, under a comprehensive central theme, all the basic meanings of the Qur'ānic preaching are mentioned in various styles in such a manner that, in spite of repetition, a reader does not feel tired of the discourse. However, because of a variation and variety in style and nature of arguments, in preceding and succeeding verses, in the implications and consequences of verses, a reader is introduced with a new flavour and taste. Some narratives while pointing to this feature of the Qur'ān, say that students of the Qur'ān will never be able to fully quench their thirst, and its freshness will never become stale. Together, these seven groups form the وَالْقُرْاٰنَ الْعَظِيْمَ (۱۵:۸۷) (and the great Qur'ān, (15:87)) mentioned in Sūrah al-Ḥijr. The particle وَ as I have explained in the exegesis of the *sūrah*, is for explication.

Central Theme

The central theme of this *sūrah* is *indhār* (warning) and this includes *indhār* regarding both types of punishment: the punishment which the rejecters of a messenger of God face in this world, and the punishment they will have to face in the Hereafter. The arguments are drawn from the signs of God in the world around man. It has been told in this *sūrah* that, an observation of this world higlights those attributes of God which necessitate the fact that this world shall one day reach its culmination. People who led their lives while being slaves to their desires and did not use their intellect will be cast into Hell, and those who used their intellect, and feared the Almighty even though they had not seen Him, will become worthy of great reward.

Analysis of the Discourse

Verses (1-5): A close scrutiny of the universe reveals that its sovereign is a Blessed and Powerful Being. He has created life and death with a purpose and it is not that this world is to continue like this forever or suddenly end: the world has been created as a trial and test for man, as to who adopts the right path and who the wrong one. A necessary outcome of this trial is that a Day should come wherein the righteous be

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rewarded and the rebellious be punished. If this universe is carefully observed to view the profound power and blessings of its Creator, not even a minor flaw can be pointed out in its great expanse. Repeated observations will only second this inference. The nearest of the seven skies has been adorned with stars by the Almighty; they serve the dual purpose of guiding people in their journeys and pelting Satan and his army if they try to overhear something revealed by God.

Verses (6-11): The power and providence of the Almighty so evident in this universe bears evidence that those who deny the Day of Reward and Punishment will have to face the torment of Hell. It will roar and shriek like a hungry lion when it sees them. Whenever a group of these rebellious people will be flung in Hell, its gate-keepers will ask them whether a warner had ever warned them of this punishment. They would admit that a warner did come to them, but they rejected him and had replied that the Almighty had revealed nothing and that whoever believed that the Almighty has revealed anything have, in fact, deviated from the right path. They would also confess that they had never tried to listen to, and understand what had been said to them, otherwise they would not have met this fate.

Verses (12-14): A mention of the fact that people who remain fearful of their Lord in this world shall be rewarded. They are assured that all their virtuous deeds are in the knowledge of God and He shall duly reward them. He is the Creator of all, has knowledge of everything and is very discerning and nothing is hidden from Him.

Verses (15-18): This earth has been created by the Almighty and is very obedient and submissive to man. Its creation and existence is a source of reminder for man of a great reality: he should roam about in it and fully benefit from all its pleasures and facilities, but should always keep in mind that these privileges entail a day of accountability before the Almighty; not even for a moment should a person become unmindful of his Lord's grasp and should always remember that whenever the Almighty intends, He can destroy him by sending a natural calamity on him. History also depicts exemplary incidents of this.

Verses (19-21): Man is warned that whatever is suspended in the unfathomable skies is held by the Almighty. He is watching over everything. If someone is deprived of His assistance and support, no one will be able to help him. If He deprives someone of sustenance, no one will be able to help that person. If He deprives a person of sustenance, no one can grant him sustenance.

Verses (22-23): Those who lead their lives while remaining slaves to their desires will never reach the real goal. Only those who remain on the right path will reach this goal. The Almighty has endowed people with the faculties of sight, hearing and reasoning so that people can remain on the right path by using them. But alas! very few people understand the worth of such favours.

Verses (25-27): The Almighty has scattered mankind all over this earth and He Himself shall definitely gather them one day. The Prophet (sws) is told to inform the disbelievers that only God knows when the Day of Judgement will come and that he himself has no

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knowledge of its time of arrival; he has only been sent to warn them about it and not to inform them about its time of arrival. However, when the Day does arrive, the faces of the disbelievers will turn black with gloom.

Verses (28-30): If these disbelievers are awaiting the change of fortunes for the Prophet (sws) and his Companions, and if it is supposed that this change does happen, then why should they themselves rest assured? They shall certainly meet the dreadful fate they have been informed of.

Text and Translation

بِسۡمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحۡمٰنِ الرَّحِيۡمِ

تَبٰرَكَ الَّذِىۡ بِيَدِهِ الۡمُلۡكُ ۖ وَهُوَ عَلٰى كُلِّ شَىۡءٍ قَدِيۡرُ ۙ﴿۱﴾ الَّذِىۡ خَلَقَ الۡمَوۡتَ وَالۡحَيٰوةَ لِيَبۡلُوَكُمۡ اَيُّكُمۡ اَحۡسَنُ عَمَلًا ؕ وَهُوَ
الۡعَزِيۡزُ الۡغَفُوۡرُ ۙ﴿۲﴾ الَّذِىۡ خَلَقَ سَبۡعَ سَمٰوٰتٍ طِبَاقًا ؕ مَا تَرٰى فِىۡ خَلۡقِ الرَّحۡمٰنِ مِنۡ تَفٰوُتٍ ؕ فَارۡجِعِ الۡبَصَرَ ۙ هَلۡ تَرٰى مِنۡ
فُطُوۡرٍ ﴿۳﴾ ثُمَّ ارۡجِعِ الۡبَصَرَ كَرَّتَيۡنِ يَنۡقَلِبۡ اِلَيۡكَ الۡبَصَرُ خَاسِئًا وَّهُوَ حَسِيۡرٌ ﴿۴﴾ وَلَقَدۡ زَيَّنَّا السَّمَآءَ الدُّنۡيَا بِمَصَابِيۡحَ وَجَعَلۡنٰهَا
رُجُوۡمًا لِّلشَّيٰطِيۡنِ وَاَعۡتَدۡنَا لَهُمۡ عَذَابَ السَّعِيۡرِ ﴿۵﴾ وَلِلَّذِيۡنَ كَفَرُوۡا بِرَبِّهِمۡ عَذَابُ جَهَنَّمَ ؕ وَبِئۡسَ الۡمَصِيۡرُ ﴿۶﴾ اِذَآ اُلۡقُوۡا فِيۡهَا
سَمِعُوۡا لَهَا شَهِيۡقًا وَّهِىَ تَفُوۡرُ ۙ﴿۷﴾ تَكَادُ تَمَيَّزُ مِنَ الۡغَيۡظِ ؕ كُلَّمَآ اُلۡقِىَ فِيۡهَا فَوۡجٌ سَاَلَهُمۡ خَزَنَتُهَآ اَلَمۡ يَاۡتِكُمۡ نَذِيۡرٌ ﴿۸﴾ قَالُوۡا بَلٰى قَدۡ
جَآءَنَا نَذِيۡرٌ ۙ فَكَذَّبۡنَا وَقُلۡنَا مَا نَزَّلَ اللّٰهُ مِنۡ شَىۡءٍ ۖ اِنۡ اَنۡتُمۡ اِلَّا فِىۡ ضَلٰلٍ كَبِيۡرٍ ﴿۹﴾ وَقَالُوۡا لَوۡ كُنَّا نَسۡمَعُ اَوۡ نَعۡقِلُ مَا كُنَّا فِىۡۤ
اَصۡحٰبِ السَّعِيۡرِ ﴿۱۰﴾ فَاعۡتَرَفُوۡا بِذَنۡۢبِهِمۡ ۚ فَسُحۡقًا لِّاَصۡحٰبِ السَّعِيۡرِ ﴿۱۱﴾ اِنَّ الَّذِيۡنَ يَخۡشَوۡنَ رَبَّهُمۡ بِالۡغَيۡبِ لَهُمۡ مَّغۡفِرَةٌ وَّاَجۡرٌ
كَبِيۡرٌ ﴿۱۲﴾ وَاَسِرُّوۡا قَوۡلَكُمۡ اَوِ اجۡهَرُوۡا بِهٖ ؕ اِنَّهٗ عَلِيۡمٌۢ بِذَاتِ الصُّدُوۡرِ ﴿۱۳﴾ اَلَا يَعۡلَمُ مَنۡ خَلَقَ ؕ وَهُوَ اللَّطِيۡفُ الۡخَبِيۡرُ ﴿۱۴﴾ هُوَ الَّذِىۡ
جَعَلَ لَكُمُ الۡاَرۡضَ ذَلُوۡلًا فَامۡشُوۡا فِىۡ مَنَاكِبِهَا وَكُلُوۡا مِنۡ رِّزۡقِهٖ ؕ وَاِلَيۡهِ النُّشُوۡرُ ﴿۱۵﴾ ءَاَمِنۡتُمۡ مَّنۡ فِى السَّمَآءِ اَنۡ يَّخۡسِفَ بِكُمُ
الۡاَرۡضَ فَاِذَا هِىَ تَمُوۡرُ ۙ﴿۱۶﴾ اَمۡ اَمِنۡتُمۡ مَّنۡ فِى السَّمَآءِ اَنۡ يُّرۡسِلَ عَلَيۡكُمۡ حَاصِبًا ؕ فَسَتَعۡلَمُوۡنَ كَيۡفَ نَذِيۡرِ ﴿۱۷﴾ وَلَقَدۡ كَذَّبَ
الَّذِيۡنَ مِنۡ قَبۡلِهِمۡ فَكَيۡفَ كَانَ نَكِيۡرِ ﴿۱۸﴾ اَوَلَمۡ يَرَوۡا اِلَى الطَّيۡرِ فَوۡقَهُمۡ صٰٓفّٰتٍ وَّيَقۡبِضۡنَ ۛؕ مَا يُمۡسِكُهُنَّ اِلَّا الرَّحۡمٰنُ ؕ اِنَّهٗ بِكُلِّ
شَىۡءٍۢ بَصِيۡرٌ ﴿۱۹﴾ اَمَّنۡ هٰذَا الَّذِىۡ هُوَ جُنۡدٌ لَّكُمۡ يَنۡصُرُكُمۡ مِّنۡ دُوۡنِ الرَّحۡمٰنِ ؕ اِنِ الۡكٰفِرُوۡنَ اِلَّا فِىۡ غُرُوۡرٍ ﴿۲۰﴾ اَمَّنۡ هٰذَا الَّذِىۡ
يَرۡزُقُكُمۡ اِنۡ اَمۡسَكَ رِزۡقَهٗ ۚ بَلۡ لَّجُّوۡا فِىۡ عُتُوٍّ وَّنُفُوۡرٍ ﴿۲۱﴾ اَفَمَنۡ يَّمۡشِىۡ مُكِبًّا عَلٰى وَجۡهِهٖۤ اَهۡدٰٓى اَمَّنۡ يَّمۡشِىۡ سَوِيًّا عَلٰى صِرَاطٍ
مُّسۡتَقِيۡمٍ ﴿۲۲﴾ قُلۡ هُوَ الَّذِىۡۤ اَنۡشَاَكُمۡ وَجَعَلَ لَكُمُ السَّمۡعَ وَالۡاَبۡصَارَ وَالۡاَفۡـِٕدَةَ ؕ قَلِيۡلًا مَّا تَشۡكُرُوۡنَ ﴿۲۳﴾ قُلۡ هُوَ الَّذِىۡ ذَرَاَكُمۡ
فِى الۡاَرۡضِ وَاِلَيۡهِ تُحۡشَرُوۡنَ ﴿۲۴﴾ وَيَقُوۡلُوۡنَ مَتٰى هٰذَا الۡوَعۡدُ اِنۡ كُنۡتُمۡ صٰدِقِيۡنَ ﴿۲۵﴾ قُلۡ اِنَّمَا الۡعِلۡمُ عِنۡدَ اللّٰهِ ۖ وَاِنَّمَاۤ اَنَا نَذِيۡرٌ
مُّبِيۡنٌ ﴿۲۶﴾ فَلَمَّا رَاَوۡهُ زُلۡفَةً سِيۡٓـَٔتۡ وُجُوۡهُ الَّذِيۡنَ كَفَرُوۡا وَقِيۡلَ هٰذَا الَّذِىۡ كُنۡتُمۡ بِهٖ تَدَّعُوۡنَ ﴿۲۷﴾ قُلۡ اَرَءَيۡتُمۡ اِنۡ اَهۡلَكَنِىَ
اللّٰهُ وَمَنۡ مَّعِىَ اَوۡ رَحِمَنَا ۙ فَمَنۡ يُّجِيۡرُ الۡكٰفِرِيۡنَ مِنۡ عَذَابٍ اَلِيۡمٍ ﴿۲۸﴾ قُلۡ هُوَ الرَّحۡمٰنُ اٰمَنَّا بِهٖ وَعَلَيۡهِ تَوَكَّلۡنَا ۚ فَسَتَعۡلَمُوۡنَ
مَنۡ هُوَ فِىۡ ضَلٰلٍ مُّبِيۡنٍ ﴿۲۹﴾ قُلۡ اَرَءَيۡتُمۡ اِنۡ اَصۡبَحَ مَآؤُكُمۡ غَوۡرًا فَمَنۡ يَّاۡتِيۡكُمۡ بِمَآءٍ مَّعِيۡنٍ ﴿۳۰﴾

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In the name of God, the Most Gracious, the Ever Merciful.

Very Great and very Benevolent is He in whose hands is the dominion of the worlds, and He has power over all things. Who created death and life that He might test you as to which of you is best regarding deeds. And He is also Mighty and Forgiving. (1-2)

He Who created seven heavens one above the other. You will not find any fault with what has been created by the Most Gracious. Look about: can you see any flaw? Look again and again. Your look will come back to you worn out and overcome. (3-4)

And We have adorned the lowest heaven with lamps and made them an abode for bombardment on the devils. And We have also prepared for these devils the torment of the Blazing Fire. And those who denied their Lord, for them is the torment of Hell and what an evil abode it is! (5-6)

When they will be cast into it, they shall hear it roaring and seething. It will almost be bursting with rage. Every time a multitude of theirs is cast into it, its keepers will ask them: "Did no warner come to you to warn you about this Day?" They will say: "A warner did come but we rejected him and said: 'God has not sent down anything; you are only in grave error.'" And they will say: "If only we had listened or used our intellect, we would not have been among the dwellers of Hell." And they will confess their sin; so cursed be these companions of Hell. (7-11)

Indeed, those who feared their Lord even though they did not see Him, there is indeed forgiveness and a great reward. And whether you speak secretly or openly, He indeed has full knowledge of all that is in the hearts. Would He not know Who He has created? He is Very Discerning and Well-Acquainted. (12-14)

He Who made the earth an obedient camel; so, walk about in its shoulders and eat from your Lord's subsistence and You shall then gather before Him. (15)

Are you not afraid of Him Who is in the heavens that He may thrust you in the earth and it suddenly start running swiftly? Are you not afraid of Him, Who is in the heavens that He may send upon you a stone-hurling wind so that you know how My warning is? And those also who were before them denied; so see how terrible was my curse. (16-18)

Have they not seen the birds above them? They fly with outstretched wings, and they also draw them in. None except the Most Gracious is holding them. Indeed, He keeps a watch on all things. (19)

Speak up: "What army do you have which will help you against the Most Gracious?" These disbelievers are in mere deception. Speak up: "Who will give you sustenance if He withholds His sustenance?" In fact, these people have become persistent in rebellion and in evading the truth. (20-21)

He who walks with his face down is rightly guided, or he who walks upright on a straight path? Tell them: "It is He Who has created you, and made for you ears, eyes and hearts. Yet, seldom are you grateful." Tell them: "It is He who has scattered you in the earth and towards Him you shall be gathered." (22-24)

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And they say: "When will this threat materialize if you are truthful?" Tell them: "Its knowledge is only with God and I am only an open warner." So when they see it drawing near, the faces of these disbelievers will turn gloomy and it shall be said to them: "This is what you had been asking for." (25-27)

Ask them: "Have you ever thought that if God destroys me and my companions, or has mercy on us who shall save the disbelievers from an afflictive doom?" (28)

Tell them: "He is the Most Gracious. We have professed faith in Him and in Him we have put our trust so soon you will know who is in manifest error." Ask them: "Speak up, if all the water you have sinks down into the earth, who will then bring out clean and pure water for you?"

Explanation

تَبٰرَكَ الَّذِیْ بِیَدِهِ الْمُلْكُ ۫ وَهُوَ عَلٰى كُلِّ شَیْءٍ قَدِیْرُ ۟ۙ[2]

The word تَبٰرَكَ encompasses the meanings of greatness and benevolence. Moreover, the word تَبٰرَكَ is a hyperbolic emphasized form (*mubālaghah*).[3] Hence, the translation above. The second part of the verse says that, besides these attributes, it not beyond Him to accomplish the greatest and the most difficult of tasks that can be imagined.

This is the observation, or should be the result of the observation made by a serious and upright person, when he reflects on the signs of this world. The reason is stated subsequently. Here, only a summary of his view is stated beforehand. Every person who reflects on this world will be faced with the questions: has its Creator created it for His entertainment and enjoyment, or as an irresponsible or unconcerned Creator who created this world, but then has no concern with the good and evil which goes on in it or that He is only the first prime-mover and has no concern with what came into being through Him or is a silent first cause which has no relationship with the effects except merely being the first cause.

Such concepts about the Creator of this universe were formed by people, either because they did not want to form a correct view about Him, or because they did not want this view to intervene in their base desires, or they did want to form a correct opinion but instead of observing His attributes in the huge universe He had created they tried to view them through the small spectacles they had invented themselves. Whereas the correct way was only one: they should have observed the world without any bias and prejudice and seen the reflection of His attributes in them. If they had done this, they would have realized that their Creator is very great, very benevolent and very wise; moreover, He has profound power. He can do whatever He wants to; no task is difficult or impossible for Him. Obviously, this concept of God negates

2. Very Great and very Benevolent is He in whose hands is the dominion of the worlds, and He has power over all things.

3. I have explained in detail the meanings and implications of this word under verses 1, 10 and 61 of Sūrah al-Furqān.

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about Him all erroneous concepts with which idolatrous nations were afflicted, and also no possibility remains for the doubts which philosophers and scientists were plagued with.

الَّذِیْ خَلَقَ الْمَوْتَ وَالْحَیٰوةَ لِیَبْلُوَكُمْ اَیُّكُمْ اَحْسَنُ عَمَلًا ؕ وَهُوَ الْعَزِیْزُ الْغَفُوْرُ ۙ﴿۲﴾[4]

In this verse, what is said in the previous verse is re-stated which throws further light on His power, wisdom and benevolence. Death and life have been created by Him, and no one else can create the two; the fact that death precedes life shows that everything has come into being from nothingness because of God's power and mercy; had He not wanted, nothing could have come into being. Life after nothingness and then death after life bear testimony to the fact that this world has been created with a purpose and that it is not correct to construe that it will continue endlessly like this or end suddenly. If this was so, then this world would be a purposeless creation, which is against the majesty of a wise, powerful and benevolent creator. On the contrary, this is evidence to the fact that, whomever the Almighty blesses with life, He does so as to test and try him; the test is whether this person spends his life to please the Almighty, or to please his own base desires. A natural outcome of this test is that He bring about one day in which He give life again to everyone, hold them accountable for their deeds and then reward or punish them accordingly.

The verse says that God is الْعَزِیْزُ (powerful), which means that no one can save people who are worthy of punishment from God's grasp; He is also الْغَفُوْرُ (forgiving) which means that He will not deprive people who are worthy of His forgiveness from His mercy and they will be regarded as its worthy recipients without any effort or intercession.

الَّذِیْ خَلَقَ سَبْعَ سَمٰوٰتٍ طِبَاقًا ؕ مَا تَرٰی فِیْ خَلْقِ الرَّحْمٰنِ مِنْ تَفٰوُتٍ ؕ فَارْجِعِ الْبَصَرَ ۙ هَلْ تَرٰی مِنْ فُطُوْرٍ ﴿۳﴾ ثُمَّ ارْجِعِ الْبَصَرَ كَرَّتَیْنِ یَنْقَلِبْ اِلَیْكَ الْبَصَرُ خَاسِئًا وَّهُوَ حَسِیْرٌ ﴿۴﴾[5]

In this verse, man is invited to observe the power, benevolence and providence of God which is referred to in the first verse. People should see His profound majesty and grandeur, and His unparalleled creativity. The quintessence of His creativity is that He created seven heavens one above the other. They are perfect and flawless. Can there be something greater in expanse than the heavens? Not even the most accomplished of architects or builders can dare point the slightest flaw in these super

4. Who created death and life that He might test you as to which of you is best regarding deeds. And He is also Mighty and Forgiving.

5. He, Who created seven heavens one above the other. You will not find any fault with what has been created by the Most Gracious. Look about: can you see any flaw? Look again and again. Your look will come back to you worn out and overcome.

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structures. The word تَفٰوُتٍ means "discrepancy, difference and incongruity." This subject is alluded to again by the word فُطُوْرٌ which means "flaw and fissure." In Sūrah Qāf, the word فُرُوْجٌ is used for this purpose: اَفَلَمْ يَنْظُرُوْٓا اِلَى السَّمَآءِ فَوْقَهُمْ كَيْفَ بَنَيْنٰهَا وَزَيَّنّٰهَا وَمَا لَهَا مِنْ فُرُوْجٍ (٥٠:٦) (Have they never observed the sky above them, and seen how We built it and perfected and left no fissures in its expanse? (50:6)).

The words ثُمَّ ارْجِعِ الْبَصَرَ كَرَّتَيْنِ يَنْقَلِبْ اِلَيْكَ الْبَصَرُ خَاسِئًا وَّهُوَ حَسِيْرٌ once again call people to look at the perfect structure of the heavens in a manner that they are left with no excuse to deny it. Repeated critical observations will leave the sight worn out and it will not be able to discover the slightest of flaws anywhere. The implied meaning is that how can any task be difficult for the God whose profound power and mercy is seen by man all around him, and is unable to estimate their countless manifestations and is also unable to see the slightest of flaw in them? Is creating man a second time and treating him in accordance with his deeds, or destroying him through a natural calamity in this world in the blink of an eye, more difficult than creating the heavens?

وَلَقَدْ زَيَّنَّا السَّمَآءَ الدُّنْيَا بِمَصَابِيْحَ وَجَعَلْنٰهَا رُجُوْمًا لِّلشَّيٰطِيْنِ وَاَعْتَدْنَا لَهُمْ عَذَابَ السَّعِيْرِ ۝[6]

After referring to the seven heavens, attention is directed at the lowest heaven because its wonders can be relatively easily observed. Viewing these lamps will lead man to the conclusion that his Creator is not only powerful, He is merciful as well; He has embellished the roof of the lowest heaven with such lamps which are beautiful to look at and which also are beneficial to mankind. Earlier in verse three, the attribute of الرَّحْمٰن (the Gracious) was mentioned in مَا تَرٰى فِيْ خَلْقِ الرَّحْمٰنِ مِنْ تَفٰوُتٍ. This is a reference to this attribute of God. It is as if this world, by its very structure and existence, does not bear witness merely to the fact that it has been created by someone who has immense power, it also simultaneously bears witness that the creator is very gracious, benevolent and hospitable, Who has decorated the roof with such grand lamps. God's attribute of الرَّحْمٰن (the Gracious) is mentioned in this *sūrah* time and again. It is essential to give due consideration to it otherwise the real majesty of the discourse will be lost sight of.

The words وَجَعَلْنٰهَا رُجُوْمًا لِّلشَّيٰطِيْنِ depict a secondary benefit of these stars: the Almighty uses them as platforms to bombard the devils. This briefly referred to phenomenon is explained at other places in the Qur'ān: in these stars, the Almighty has made forts and castles (*burūj*) which are guarded by angels. If devils try to rise in the skies to eavesdrop on a revelation being sent down, they pelt these devils with shooting stars to ward them off. I have explained the nature of these shooting stars in the exegesis of Sūrah al-Rahmān. Those interested in details can look it up.

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6. And We have adorned the lowest heaven with lamps and made them an abode for bombardment on the devils. And We have also prepared for these devils the torment of the Blazing Fire.

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A mention of this bombardment in this *sūrah* is meant to tell man that the Almighty, after creating this world with such grandeur and thoroughness, has not left it alone that devils can do whatever they want to; on the contrary, He watches over them; when they try to exceed limits, they are checked. This shows that this world has not been left unattended: whoever has created it, is vigilantly guarding it, and one day, all men and jinn who had created disorder in this world will meet their fate: the punishment of Hell has been prepared for them: وَاَعْتَدْنَا لَهُمْ عَذَابَ السَّعِيْرِ.

وَلِلَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا بِرَبِّهِمْ عَذَابُ جَهَنَّمَ ؕ وَبِئْسَ الْمَصِيْرُ ۝۶[7]

The discourse shifts from the fate of the devils mentioned above to the fate of men who deny the Almighty. "Denying their Lord" here means denying the Hereafter and the reward and punishment which will take place therein. The reason for this, as I have referred to at many places in this exegesis, is that denying the Hereafter is tantamount to denying all the basic attributes – power, justice, mercy and providence – of God. While denying these attributes, belief in God or disbelief in Him is equivalent. Consequently, on these grounds, the Qur'ān at various instances has called the idolaters as *kuffār,* even though they never denied God.

The words وَبِئْسَ الْمَصِيْرُ are meant to convey the fact that they have chosen a very evil abode for themselves. Certain aspects of this evil element are explained further down in the *sūrah*.

اِذَآ اُلْقُوْا فِيْهَا سَمِعُوْا لَهَا شَهِيْقًا وَّهِيَ تَفُوْرُ ۝۷[8]

Hell will roar and growl like a hungry lion when it will see these disbelievers. Its snarls will be at their peak at that time.

تَكَادُ تَمَيَّزُ مِنَ الْغَيْظِ ؕ كُلَّمَآ اُلْقِيَ فِيْهَا فَوْجٌ سَاَلَهُمْ خَزَنَتُهَآ اَلَمْ يَاْتِكُمْ نَذِيْرٌ ۝۸ قَالُوْا بَلٰى قَدْ جَآءَنَا نَذِيْرٌ ۙ فَكَذَّبْنَا وَ قُلْنَا مَا نَزَّلَ اللّٰهُ مِنْ شَيْءٍ ۖ اِنْ اَنْتُمْ اِلَّا فِيْ ضَلٰلٍ كَبِيْرٍ ۝۹[9]

This is an expression of Hell's anger. Obviously, the reason for this rage and fury would be that in its view those who spent their lives in indifference spent it while being blind and deaf. Otherwise, there was no dearth of any signs in this world which point to a day of reckoning and neither was it ever devoid of warners. Hence, people

7. And those who denied their Lord, for them is the torment of Hell and what an evil abode it is!

8. When they will be cast into it, they shall hear it roaring and seething.

9. It will almost be bursting with rage. Every time a multitude of theirs is cast into it, its keepers will ask them: "Did no warner come to you to warn you about this Day?" They will say: "A warner did come, but we rejected him and said: 'God has not sent down anything; you are only in grave error.'"

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who did not benefit from their eyes and ears, in spite of being blessed with them do not deserve any sympathy. Thus, the keepers of Hell will rebuke them in the manner described in this verse.

The words اِنۡ اَنۡتُمۡ اِلَّا فِیۡ ضَلٰلٍ کَبِیۡرٍ express the fact that not only these people paid no heed to those sent to warn them and did not realize their error, they also went so far as to call these warners to be misguided people; they censured these warners for intimidating them by saying that they will be raised to life after they die and will be accountable for each and every word they spoke and each and every deed they did and that later they and their forefathers will be cast into Hell.

The pronoun اَنۡتُمۡ (you) is in the plural form even though the noun (نَذِیۡرٌ) it refers to is singular. It is evident from this that these people will confess that they gave this very answer to every person who warned them of the Hereafter whether he was a messenger of God or his follower.

وَ قَالُوۡا لَوۡ کُنَّا نَسۡمَعُ اَوۡ نَعۡقِلُ مَا کُنَّا فِیۡۤ اَصۡحٰبِ السَّعِیۡرِ ﴿۱۰﴾[10]

This is a further confession they will make; alas, they neither opened their ears to the warners who were sent to them, nor used their own intellect and hence met this dreadful fate.

فَاعۡتَرَفُوۡا بِذَنۡۢبِہِمۡ ۚ فَسُحۡقًا لِّاَصۡحٰبِ السَّعِیۡرِ ﴿۱۱﴾[11]

It is this confession on their part which will take them to Hell. Cursed are these wretched people who deliberately did deeds that led them to this dreadful abode.

اِنَّ الَّذِیۡنَ یَخۡشَوۡنَ رَبَّہُمۡ بِالۡغَیۡبِ لَہُمۡ مَّغۡفِرَۃٌ وَّ اَجۡرٌ کَبِیۡرٌ ﴿۱۲﴾[12]

After a fate of the rejecters of the Day of Judgement is mentioned, the fate of those people who feared God in this world even though they had not seen the Day of Judgement with their eyes is mentioned here. Believing in such a day without seeing it shows how intellectually discerning they were: they did not spend their lives while having shut their ears and eyes accepting something only after they saw it; on the contrary, they reflected on the signs of this world; they paid heed to those who warned them and reflected deeply on what they advised them. For this reason, they will deserve the great blessings of God. The real test of a person in this world is that by using his intellect and reasoning, he professes belief in what the Almighty has

10. And they will say: "If only we had listened or used our intellect, we would not have been among the dwellers of Hell."

11. And they will confess their sin; so cursed be these companions of Hell.

12. Indeed, those who feared their Lord even though they did not see Him, there is indeed forgiveness and a great reward.

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informed him through His prophets. He, who succeeded in this test deserves every reward of God, and he who failed in it is like an animal or even worse, even though he might be a great philosopher and scientist.

وَاَسِرُّوْا قَوْلَكُمْ اَوِ اجْهَرُوْا بِهٖ ؕ اِنَّهٗ عَلِيْمٌۢ بِذَاتِ الصُّدُوْرِ ﴿۱۳﴾ اَلَا يَعْلَمُ مَنْ خَلَقَ ؕ وَهُوَ اللَّطِيْفُ الْخَبِيْرُ ﴿۱۴﴾[13]

These verses can convey either threat or assurance. Here both are implied. They sound a threat to the disbelievers of the Day of Judgement mentioned above: they should not be under the misconception that the Almighty is unaware of some hidden or apparent fact: He is well aware of what is hidden and what is apparent. How can He be unaware of these when He even knows what is in the hearts?

After a mention of the disbelievers of the Day of Judgement, people who fear God even though they have not seen Him are mentioned. For them, these words sound an assurance: whatever they say, whether openly or secretly, is in God's knowledge. He is fully aware of what they say to Him in the seclusion of night and is also fully aware of what they do openly in the day and is even aware of what is in their hearts. So, when nothing is hidden from Him, they should rest assured that the most minute of virtuous deeds will not go unnoticed; they shall be fully rewarded for each and every deed they do.

The words اَلَا يَعْلَمُ مَنْ خَلَقَ ؕ وَهُوَ اللَّطِيْفُ الْخَبِيْرُ mention the reason why the Almighty is or should be aware of every hidden and apparent: when He has created them, and no one can refute this fact, then how is it possible that a creator be unaware of his creation? How can He who has created all potentials and abilities and by whose command the whole machinery of this universe is functioning be unaware of the most minute movements of His creation?

The attribute لَطِيفٌ, as is explained at various places in this exegesis, refers to someone who is very discerning and minute in observation. The Almighty is someone, Who is in fact, the Discerning and the Well-Acquainted. A person's knowledge of the affairs of someone else is only partial and incomplete; however, the Almighty has created everyone and provides sustenance to each. For this reason, His knowledge encompasses the most minute of things.

It needs to be kept in mind that one of the factors contributing to the belief of polytheism, is the concept of people about the extent of God's knowledge. Until and unless the true concept of the nature and extent of God's knowledge is gauged, the fear of God cannot find its roots in a person, and he cannot have a true taste of God's trust.

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13. And whether you speak secretly or openly, He indeed has full knowledge of all that is in the hearts. Would He not know Who He has created? He is Very Discerning and Well-Acquainted.

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هُوَ الَّذِیْ جَعَلَ لَكُمُ الْاَرْضَ ذَلُوْلًا فَامْشُوْا فِیْ مَنَاكِبِهَا وَ كُلُوْا مِنْ رِّزْقِهٖ ؕ وَ اِلَیْهِ النُّشُوْرُ ﴿۱۵﴾[14]

After presenting the miraculous signs in the heavens as evidence for the Hereafter, here, in this verse, the providence found in the earth is used to adduce the same evidence.

If one reflects on the words ذَلُوْلٌ (obedient) and مَنَاكِبُ (shoulders), one will realize that concealed in these words is a parable. This earth has been compared to an obedient camel. The passages, valleys and mountain in the earth are likened to its shoulders. It is as if mankind is like lice which roams in the shoulders of the earth for its subsistence. These lice walk about and obtain their fodder from it.

The words وَ كُلُوْا مِنْ رِّزْقِهٖ وَ اِلَیْهِ النُّشُوْرُ point to the elaborate arrangement of providence; by its very existence, it invites man to benefit from it the sustenance and security it provides. He should remember that the God who has made this arrangement for him, even though it was not his right, will not let him go scot-free and unaccountable. Man will die one day and once again rise up before the Almighty. This is because it is totally against sense and reason that man enjoys the blessings of God and still not be held accountable for them.

ءَاَمِنْتُمْ مَّنْ فِی السَّمَآءِ اَنْ یَّخْسِفَ بِكُمُ الْاَرْضَ فَاِذَا هِیَ تَمُوْرُ ﴿۱۶﴾[15]

By referring to the weak and feeble existence of man mentioned in the previous verse, he is admonished in this verse: he who is wondering about the wide expanse of the earth like lice should not show so much conceit that when he is warned of God's punishment, he makes fun of it and questions its origin and sender.

The word مَوْرٌ means to move swiftly. It is used in this sense in يَوْمَ تَمُوْرُ السَّمَآءُ مَوْرًا. (۵۲:۹) (On that day, the sky will shake and reel (52:9)). People have translated this word variously; however, it repeatedly comes to my mind that here it means to run in an unrestrained manner. This is because, firstly, the word primarily means "swift movement" and secondly, in a previous verse the earth is likened to an obedient camel. As a result, the meaning of the word which I have adopted seems more appropriate. The overall implied meaning of the verse is that it is indeed God's blessing that He has put the earth and its resources to the service of man, and it is behaving like an obedient camel to him; however, if the Almighty lets loose the reins of this camel, man will see how swiftly it will run and no one will be able to control it.

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14. He Who made the earth an obedient camel; so, walk about in its shoulders and eat from Your Lord's subsistence and you shall then gather before Him.

15. Are you not afraid of Him Who is in the heavens that He may thrust you in the earth and it suddenly start running swiftly?

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اَمۡ اَمِنۡتُمۡ مَّنۡ فِی السَّمَآءِ اَنۡ یُّرۡسِلَ عَلَیۡکُمۡ حَاصِبًا ؕ فَسَتَعۡلَمُوۡنَ کَیۡفَ نَذِیۡرِ ﴿۱۷﴾[16]

In the previous verse, it was mentioned that the punishment would come from beneath man's feet; this verse warns him of a punishment that may descend on him from above.

The word حَاصِبٌ refers to a stone-hurling wind. I have explained this word many times in this exegesis. I have also cited in Sūrah al-Dhāriyāt, my mentor Farāhī's research on this word. It has remained an important element in the destruction of previous nations. In particular, the people of Lot (sws) were destroyed by such a wind. The Quraysh often had the chance to pass by the decimated settlements of the people of Lot (sws). Hence, a mention of this incident could have been effective for the Quraysh.

The word نَذِیۡرِ is used here as a verbal noun, and its usage in this meaning is very common. The implied meaning is that, today these people think that the God's warnings are a joke; however, when the punishment comes before them, they will realize how true is what they were making fun of and how dreadfully will it manifest itself before them.

وَ لَقَدۡ کَذَّبَ الَّذِیۡنَ مِنۡ قَبۡلِہِمۡ فَکَیۡفَ کَانَ نَکِیۡرِ ﴿۱۸﴾[17]

In this verse, the Quraysh are directed to seek a lesson from their history: if this punishment has not yet arrived, they should not make fun of it; this is no wisdom that a person only believes in what he can see; the Quraysh should seek a lesson from the accounts of other nations; these nations had also been warned like the Quraysh, but they, too, made fun of these warnings. At last, the same torment they were making fun of seized them.

The words فَکَیۡفَ کَانَ نَکِیۡرِ express the hate and disgust on the part of the Almighty; These people were left to the mercy of this punishment with great repugnance, and there was no one who could help them.

اَوَ لَمۡ یَرَوۡا اِلَی الطَّیۡرِ فَوۡقَہُمۡ صٰٓفّٰتٍ وَّ یَقۡبِضۡنَ ۘ مَا یُمۡسِکُہُنَّ اِلَّا الرَّحۡمٰنُ ؕ اِنَّہٗ بِکُلِّ شَیۡءٍۭ بَصِیۡرٌ ﴿۱۹﴾[18]

What is implied by this verse is that, no object of this world, whether it resides in the sky or in the earth, is automatic or controls its self. It is the Almighty Who moves a thing or holds it. The earth is held stationery beneath our feet simply because the

16. Are you not afraid of Him Who is in the heavens that He may send upon you a stone-hurling wind so that you know how My warning is?

17. And those also who were before them denied; so see how terrible was my curse.

18. Have they not seen the birds above them? They fly with outstretched wings, and they also draw them in. None except the Most Gracious is holding them. Indeed, He keeps a watch on all things.

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Almighty has willed it. Had He not held and controlled the earth, it would have swiftly run away from its orbit with all its inhabitants. Similarly, if the sky is held stationary above our heads, it is because of the Almighty. If He lets go of it, it might even fall on our heads. Here, in this verse, man is made to understand this fact through an example: whether, with wings outstretched or drawn in it is only the most Gracious Almighty Who holds the birds in the sky in both these states. If He lets go of them, they will immediately fall down. The implication is that man should analogously regard the stars and planets of this vast universe to be held by the Almighty too. If He does not hold them in this manner, only one of them would be enough to destroy this earth by falling upon it.

The verse اِنَّهٗ بِكُلِّ شَیۡءٍۭ بَصِیۡرٌ refers to the fact that it is the Most Gracious Almighty Who is watching over everything and holding it together. If He only allows a single screw of an object to be let loose, this whole world will be devastated in the blink of an eye.

اَمَّنۡ هٰذَا الَّذِیۡ هُوَ جُنۡدٌ لَّكُمۡ یَنۡصُرُكُمۡ مِّنۡ دُوۡنِ الرَّحۡمٰنِ ؕ اِنِ الۡكٰفِرُوۡنَ اِلَّا فِیۡ غُرُوۡرٍ ﴿۲۰﴾[19]

The words اِنِ الۡكٰفِرُوۡنَ اِلَّا فِیۡ غُرُوۡرٍ are an expression of regret on the wretchedness of these people: their pomp and show gave the impression that they had had built an impregnable defence around them which none could conquer; however, these people are under great deception. The slightest wave of God's punishment would reduce the edifice of their defence to bits and pieces.

اَمَّنۡ هٰذَا الَّذِیۡ یَرۡزُقُكُمۡ اِنۡ اَمۡسَكَ رِزۡقَهٗ ۚ بَلۡ لَّجُّوۡا فِیۡ عُتُوٍّ وَّنُفُوۡرٍ ﴿۲۱﴾[20]

Contextual indication shows that the word رِزۡقٌ (sustenance) here refers to rain which becomes a source of sustenance. This word is used thus at many places in the Qur'ān.

The words بَلۡ لَّجُّوۡا فِیۡ عُتُوٍّ وَّنُفُوۡرٍ are an expression of regret over their stubbornness. Even though they cannot dare reply to any of the above questions in the affirmative, they are still persistent in their rebellion and evasion from the truth. In other words, what is implied is that if these people are willing to use their intellect, they can be convinced; however, there is no remedy for obduracy.

اَفَمَنۡ یَّمۡشِیۡ مُكِبًّا عَلٰی وَجۡهِهٖۤ اَهۡدٰۤی اَمَّنۡ یَّمۡشِیۡ سَوِیًّا عَلٰی صِرَاطٍ مُّسۡتَقِیۡمٍ ﴿۲۲﴾[21]

Mentioned in this verse is the reason why these people are not benefiting from the

19. Speak up: "What army do you have who will help you against the Most Gracious? These disbelievers are in mere deception."

20. Speak up: "Who will give you sustenance if He withholds His sustenance? In fact, these people have become persistent in rebellion and in evading the truth."

21. He who walks with his face down is rightly guided or he who walks upright on a straight path?

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guidance revealed to them and why they are wondering about far from the truth.

The verse says that like dogs these people are slaves to their desires. Just as a dog walks face down on the ground sniffing about in the hope to find something, in a similar manner, these people have also entrusted their reins to their desires instead of their intellect; they too walk about face down with closed eyes following their whims and desires. He, who is after his desires can never be guided. Only that person is guided who walks face up on the straight path, while assessing what is on his left and right, back and front. For this very reason, the Almighty has created man such that he can walk while being erect and upright; He has not created him so that he walks face down like animals. Alas! Many human beings follow animals in this regard, and in this manner, loose that higher ability which is the hallmark of human beings.

قُلْ هُوَ الَّذِیْٓ اَنْشَاَكُمْ وَجَعَلَ لَكُمُ السَّمْعَ وَالْاَبْصَارَ وَالْاَفْـِٕدَةَ ؕ قَلِیْلًا مَّا تَشْكُرُوْنَ ﴿۲۳﴾[22]

This verse deplores their deprivation and lack of treasuring the blessings of God. Instead of benefiting from these faculties which were given to them for a very noble purpose, alas, they ended up following dogs and other animals, and instead of being guided by their mind and intellect became slaves of their desires.

قُلْ هُوَ الَّذِیْ ذَرَاَكُمْ فِی الْاَرْضِ وَاِلَیْهِ تُحْشَرُوْنَ ﴿۲۴﴾[23]

A reminder is sounded once again about the actual reality: if they only use their intellect, they will come to know that the God Who had sown man in the earth and Who is nurturing them, will not let them go unaccountable; He will definitely harvest the crop He has cultivated and gather it in a field. He will then separate the chaff from the grain, and after collecting it in the granary, He will burn the chaff. Whenever a farmer sows a crop in his field, and feeds it with manure and water and protects it from birds and other animals, everyone knows, without even being told that he will one day harvest it, and will separate the chaff from the grain. The question is that why do not the addressees of this verse also not understand this reality when it is related to God. Has God created them without a purpose and all His providence that sustains them is meaningless?

It may be noted that what is mentioned by the Qur'ān in this verse in very simple words is stated in previous scriptures, in particular, the Bible in various styles. This verse is also found in Sūrah al-Mu'minūn (23:79). I have explained it there in detail; those interested can look it up.

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22. Tell them: "It is He Who has created you, and made for you ears, eyes and hearts. Yet, seldom are you grateful."

23. Tell them: "It is He who has scattered you in the earth and towards Him you shall be gathered."

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وَيَقُوْلُوْنَ مَتٰى هٰذَا الْوَعْدُ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ صٰدِقِيْنَ ﴿٢٥﴾ قُلْ اِنَّمَا الْعِلْمُ عِنْدَ اللّٰهِ ۫ وَاِنَّمَآ اَنَا نَذِيْرٌ مُّبِيْنٌ ﴿٢٦﴾[24]

After hearing all this, they ask: when will the Day of Judgement come? This is their sole ground for rejecting it: if it is to come, why is it not coming, and why do not those who warn about it inform them of its exact time of arrival? In the opinion of these rejecters, since these warners do not or cannot tell them about this time, they are liars. The Prophet (sws), in return, is told to merely convey to them that he is only a warner and only God knows when it will arrive; no one else knows when it will come; however, this much is certain that it will definitely come.

Since this objection raised by them is absolutely baseless, it is not answered in much detail. However, at some other places in the Qur'ān, we also find details: rejecting a thing simply because its exact time of arrival cannot be divulged is blatant foolishness. There are some many incidents of this world which we experience in our everyday lives whose exact time of appearance is known to no one, yet we all believe in their happening.

فَلَمَّا رَاَوْهُ زُلْفَةً سِيْٓـَٔتْ وُجُوْهُ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا وَقِيْلَ هٰذَا الَّذِيْ كُنْتُمْ بِهٖ تَدَّعُوْنَ ﴿٢٧﴾[25]

The implication of this verse is that, today they ask with great vanity that they be shown this Day; however, all this conceit is till the time it does not appear. As soon as it does, their faces will become dismal and they will become very apprehensive. At that time, they will be told that this is what they were demanding; so once it has appeared, why have they now become so anxious and frightened? It is being sent to them on their demand and they should now have a taste of it.

قُلْ اَرَءَيْتُمْ اِنْ اَهْلَكَنِيَ اللّٰهُ وَمَنْ مَّعِيَ اَوْ رَحِمَنَا ۙ فَمَنْ يُّجِيْرُ الْكٰفِرِيْنَ مِنْ عَذَابٍ اَلِيْمٍ ﴿٢٨﴾[26]

When the disbelievers would be threatened with punishment, they, in order to appease their masses, would also advise them to not be over-awed by what the Prophet (sws) says; this warning is mere oratory and poetry on his part; soon his days will be over, and his call will vanish in thin air. They would go on to say that this person warns them of a punishment, whereas they are waiting for the time when his period of bloom ends. In the Qur'ān, this subject is discussed at a number of places. For example, in Sūrah al-Ṭūr, it is said:

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24. And they say: "When will this threat materialize if you are truthful?" Tell them: "Its knowledge is only with God and I am only an open warner."

25. So, when they see it drawing near, the faces of these disbelievers will turn gloomy and it shall be said to them: This is what you had been asking for.

26. Ask them: "Have you ever thought that if God destroys me and my companions or has mercy on us, who shall save the disbelievers from an afflictive doom?"

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اَمۡ يَقُوۡلُوۡنَ شَاعِرٌ نَّتَرَبَّصُ بِهٖ رَيۡبَ الۡمَنُوۡنِ. قُلۡ تَرَبَّصُوۡا فَاِنِّيۡ مَعَكُمۡ مِّنَ الۡمُتَرَبِّصِيۡنَ. (٥٢: ٣٠-٣١)

Do they say: "He is but a poet: we are waiting for some misfortune to befall him?" Tell [them]: "Wait if you will; I too am waiting." (52:30-31)

The implication of the verse under discussion is that these people, as per their contention should wait for the downfall of the Prophet (sws), while Muslims wait for the destruction of these disbelievers through a divine punishment. The rejoinder from the Muslims is that they will not fight with them on this contention of theirs; only God knows whether He will destroy them or have mercy on them; they have put their trust in God and for this reason, hope that He will have mercy on them; however, if supposedly, the opinion of the disbelievers is correct and these Muslims will one day face their end, then how can the disbelievers rest assured that they will not face the wrath and anger of God? Who can save them? The Day of Judgement is bound to come; the arguments which bear witness to its arrival are conclusive and irrefutable; reward and punishment are destined to take place; no one can refute or run away from them; believers and disbelievers, the pious and wicked, cannot be equal; if this is an indubitable reality, then, even if the Muslims are wiped out, what good will this do to the fate of the disbelievers? They will have to face their fate with which they are being informed of. In other words, the disbelievers should not assure themselves on such weak and childish grounds and should fear what lies in store for them.

قُلۡ هُوَ الرَّحۡمٰنُ اٰمَنَّا بِهٖ وَعَلَيۡهِ تَوَكَّلۡنَا ۚ فَسَتَعۡلَمُوۡنَ مَنۡ هُوَ فِيۡ ضَلٰلٍ مُّبِيۡنٍ ﴿٢٩﴾[27]

Muslims are told to inform their counterparts that they can make no claim as to what will happen to them in future. Only the Almighty has knowledge of this; however, since the Almighty is Gracious and Merciful, and they have professed faith in Him and reposed their trust in Him, it is hoped that He will have mercy on them; if the disbelievers want to dispute with the believers, they should wait; soon they shall know who among the two is in grave and manifest error.

قُلۡ اَرَءَيۡتُمۡ اِنۡ اَصۡبَحَ مَآؤُكُمۡ غَوۡرًا فَمَنۡ يَّاۡتِيۡكُمۡ بِمَآءٍ مَّعِيۡنٍ ﴿٣٠﴾[28]

The expression مَآءٍ مَّعِيۡنٍ refers to pure and unadulterated water.

There can be two cases in which the water sinks down into the earth.

Firstly, the water level in the earth recedes down so much that obtaining water from the earth becomes virtually impossible. There are many places in this world where the

27. Tell them: "He is the Most Gracious. We believe in Him and in Him we have put our trust, so, soon you will know who is in manifest error."

28. Ask them: "Speak up, if all the water you have sinks down into the earth, who will then bring out clean and pure water for you?"

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water level is so deep underneath that even tube wells are not very successful in acquiring it, let alone wells.

Secondly, because of little or no rain, the water of the canals, springs and rivers becomes muddy.

Here both these meanings can be attributed to the expression. However, my mind goes towards the second of these interpretations keeping in view the words مَآءٍ مَّعِيْنٍ.

In the previous verses, those who were making fun of divine punishment were warned of various things which were near at hand: they should not regard it to be improbable; the Almighty can seize them from wherever He likes. Here, in this verse, a final argument is presented: they should not go far, and just contemplate what will happen if water becomes muddy because of its level being lowered; who will then supply them with fresh and pure water? If this is true, then how can a person become unafraid of the God in Whose hands is his life-vein.

By the grace of God, I come to the end of this *sūrah's* exegesis. فَالْحَمْدُ لِلّٰهِ عَلَى إِحْسَانِهِ (gratitude be to God for His favour).

Raḥmānābād,
22nd June 1978 AD
15th Rajab, 1398 AH

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Tadabbur i Qur'ān

Sūrah al-Qalam (68)

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Sūrah al-Qalam

Central Theme

This *sūrah* forms a pair with Sūrah al-Mulk, the previous *sūrah*. Thus there is no principal difference between the central themes and topics of the two. The difference lies in the style, nature of arguments and the tone adopted. Just as in the previous *sūrah,* the Quraysh are warned of the punishment on the Day of Judgement and of that which they will face in this world if they deny the Day of Judgement, similar is the warning sounded in this *sūrah.* However, this *sūrah* is more stern in its tone.

Relationship with the Previous *Sūrah* and Analysis of the Discourse

At the end of the previous *sūrah*, the Quraysh were addressed through the tongue of the Prophet (sws) and told: قُلْ اَرَءَيْتُمْ اِنْ اَهْلَكَنِيَ اللّٰهُ وَ مَنْ مَّعِيَ اَوْ رَحِمَنَا فَمَنْ يُّجِيْرُ الْكٰفِرِيْنَ مِنْ عَذَابٍ اَلِيْمٍ (٢٨:٦٧) (Ask them: "Have you ever thought that if God destroys me and my companions or has mercy on us, who shall save the disbelievers from an afflictive doom?") The implication was that, they should not be crazy enough to think that the Prophet (sws) was a poet or a lunatic, who will soon be destroyed by the vicissitudes of time. Even if their desire was fulfilled, they still had no grounds for remaining content. The question that still remained for them was: who would save them from the punishment of God? In order to support this premise, a comparison is made in this *sūrah* between the preaching of the Prophet (sws), the Book presented by him and his lofty character with the wicked and corrupt leadership of the Quraysh. The purpose of this comparison is to show that it would soon become evident to friend and foe that those who were in the grasp of their wretched leaders were being led to ruin and those who were the guided shall attain success.

After this, the Quraysh are admonished through the parable of the people of the orchard, that the peace and security they have today should not mislead them to think that they would remain under the same conditions forever. The God Who has bestowed them with these blessings has the power to take them away too. If they have no fear of Him, then they should remember that He can deprive them of these blessings in the blink of an eye and leave them to brood over the consequences.

At the end of the *sūrah*, the addressees are vehemently reprimanded over a false notion: they thought that if ever the Hereafter came, they would be blessed with the same favours there, in fact even more. They are asked how they have regarded God to be so unjust that He would equate the righteous with the wrongdoers. At the same

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time, they are challenged that if they have any oath from God in this regard or if there are some people who have assured them of this, then they should present this evidence. In this connection, the Prophet (sws) is assured that he should not worry about the vain talk of these people. When the upheaval of the Day of Judgement takes place, they will come to know how far their dreams were from reality.

At the end, the Prophet (sws) is informed that these people have been caught in the long noose of the respite given to them by God. Strong is God's scheme; there is no possibility for them to escape. So the Prophet (sws) should wait for the decision of God, and should not follow Jonah (sws) in showing impatience in this matter as a result of which he had to face a severe trial.

Text and Translation

بِسۡمِ اللّٰہِ الرَّحۡمٰنِ الرَّحِیۡمِ

نٓ وَ الۡقَلَمِ وَ مَا یَسۡطُرُوۡنَ ۙ﴿۱﴾ مَاۤ اَنۡتَ بِنِعۡمَۃِ رَبِّکَ بِمَجۡنُوۡنٍ ۚ﴿۲﴾ وَ اِنَّ لَکَ لَاَجۡرًا غَیۡرَ مَمۡنُوۡنٍ ۚ﴿۳﴾ وَ اِنَّکَ لَعَلٰی خُلُقٍ
عَظِیۡمٍ ﴿۴﴾ فَسَتُبۡصِرُ وَ یُبۡصِرُوۡنَ ۙ﴿۵﴾ بِاَیِّیۡکُمُ الۡمَفۡتُوۡنُ ﴿۶﴾ اِنَّ رَبَّکَ ہُوَ اَعۡلَمُ بِمَنۡ ضَلَّ عَنۡ سَبِیۡلِہٖ ۫ وَ ہُوَ اَعۡلَمُ بِالۡمُہۡتَدِیۡنَ
﴿۷﴾ فَلَا تُطِعِ الۡمُکَذِّبِیۡنَ ﴿۸﴾ وَدُّوۡا لَوۡ تُدۡہِنُ فَیُدۡہِنُوۡنَ ﴿۹﴾ وَ لَا تُطِعۡ کُلَّ حَلَّافٍ مَّہِیۡنٍ ۙ﴿۱۰﴾ ہَمَّازٍ مَّشَّآءٍۭ بِنَمِیۡمٍ ۙ﴿۱۱﴾
مَّنَّاعٍ لِّلۡخَیۡرِ مُعۡتَدٍ اَثِیۡمٍ ۙ﴿۱۲﴾ عُتُلٍّۭ بَعۡدَ ذٰلِکَ زَنِیۡمٍ ۙ﴿۱۳﴾ اَنۡ کَانَ ذَا مَالٍ وَّ بَنِیۡنَ ؕ﴿۱۴﴾ اِذَا تُتۡلٰی عَلَیۡہِ اٰیٰتُنَا قَالَ
اَسَاطِیۡرُ الۡاَوَّلِیۡنَ ﴿۱۵﴾ سَنَسِمُہٗ عَلَی الۡخُرۡطُوۡمِ ﴿۱۶﴾ اِنَّا بَلَوۡنٰہُمۡ کَمَا بَلَوۡنَاۤ اَصۡحٰبَ الۡجَنَّۃِ ۚ اِذۡ اَقۡسَمُوۡا لَیَصۡرِمُنَّہَا مُصۡبِحِیۡنَ
﴿۱۷﴾ وَ لَا یَسۡتَثۡنُوۡنَ ﴿۱۸﴾ فَطَافَ عَلَیۡہَا طَآئِفٌ مِّنۡ رَّبِّکَ وَ ہُمۡ نَآئِمُوۡنَ ﴿۱۹﴾ فَاَصۡبَحَتۡ کَالصَّرِیۡمِ ۙ﴿۲۰﴾ فَتَنَادَوۡا مُصۡبِحِیۡنَ
﴿۲۱﴾ اَنِ اغۡدُوۡا عَلٰی حَرۡثِکُمۡ اِنۡ کُنۡتُمۡ صٰرِمِیۡنَ ﴿۲۲﴾ فَانۡطَلَقُوۡا وَ ہُمۡ یَتَخَافَتُوۡنَ ﴿۲۳﴾ اَنۡ لَّا یَدۡخُلَنَّہَا الۡیَوۡمَ عَلَیۡکُمۡ
مِّسۡکِیۡنٌ ۙ﴿۲۴﴾ وَّ غَدَوۡا عَلٰی حَرۡدٍ قٰدِرِیۡنَ ﴿۲۵﴾ فَلَمَّا رَاَوۡہَا قَالُوۡۤا اِنَّا لَضَآلُّوۡنَ ۙ﴿۲۶﴾ بَلۡ نَحۡنُ مَحۡرُوۡمُوۡنَ ﴿۲۷﴾ قَالَ اَوۡسَطُہُمۡ
اَلَمۡ اَقُلۡ لَّکُمۡ لَوۡلَا تُسَبِّحُوۡنَ ﴿۲۸﴾ قَالُوۡا سُبۡحٰنَ رَبِّنَاۤ اِنَّا کُنَّا ظٰلِمِیۡنَ ﴿۲۹﴾ فَاَقۡبَلَ بَعۡضُہُمۡ عَلٰی بَعۡضٍ یَّتَلَاوَمُوۡنَ ﴿۳۰﴾ قَالُوۡا
یٰوَیۡلَنَاۤ اِنَّا کُنَّا طٰغِیۡنَ ﴿۳۱﴾ عَسٰی رَبُّنَاۤ اَنۡ یُّبۡدِلَنَا خَیۡرًا مِّنۡہَاۤ اِنَّاۤ اِلٰی رَبِّنَا رٰغِبُوۡنَ ﴿۳۲﴾ کَذٰلِکَ الۡعَذَابُ ؕ وَ لَعَذَابُ الۡاٰخِرَۃِ
اَکۡبَرُ ۘ لَوۡ کَانُوۡا یَعۡلَمُوۡنَ ﴿۳۳﴾ اِنَّ لِلۡمُتَّقِیۡنَ عِنۡدَ رَبِّہِمۡ جَنّٰتِ النَّعِیۡمِ ﴿۳۴﴾ اَفَنَجۡعَلُ الۡمُسۡلِمِیۡنَ کَالۡمُجۡرِمِیۡنَ ﴿۳۵﴾ مَا لَکُمۡ ۟
کَیۡفَ تَحۡکُمُوۡنَ ﴿۳۶﴾ اَمۡ لَکُمۡ کِتٰبٌ فِیۡہِ تَدۡرُسُوۡنَ ﴿۳۷﴾ اِنَّ لَکُمۡ فِیۡہِ لَمَا تَخَیَّرُوۡنَ ﴿۳۸﴾ اَمۡ لَکُمۡ اَیۡمَانٌ عَلَیۡنَا بَالِغَۃٌ اِلٰی یَوۡمِ
الۡقِیٰمَۃِ ۙ اِنَّ لَکُمۡ لَمَا تَحۡکُمُوۡنَ ﴿۳۹﴾ سَلۡہُمۡ اَیُّہُمۡ بِذٰلِکَ زَعِیۡمٌ ﴿۴۰﴾ اَمۡ لَہُمۡ شُرَکَآءُ ۚ فَلۡیَاۡتُوۡا بِشُرَکَآئِہِمۡ اِنۡ کَانُوۡا صٰدِقِیۡنَ
﴿۴۱﴾ یَوۡمَ یُکۡشَفُ عَنۡ سَاقٍ وَّ یُدۡعَوۡنَ اِلَی السُّجُوۡدِ فَلَا یَسۡتَطِیۡعُوۡنَ ۙ﴿۴۲﴾ خَاشِعَۃً اَبۡصَارُہُمۡ تَرۡہَقُہُمۡ ذِلَّۃٌ ؕ وَ قَدۡ کَانُوۡا
یُدۡعَوۡنَ اِلَی السُّجُوۡدِ وَ ہُمۡ سٰلِمُوۡنَ ﴿۴۳﴾ فَذَرۡنِیۡ وَ مَنۡ یُّکَذِّبُ بِہٰذَا الۡحَدِیۡثِ ؕ سَنَسۡتَدۡرِجُہُمۡ مِّنۡ حَیۡثُ لَا یَعۡلَمُوۡنَ ۙ﴿۴۴﴾ وَ
اُمۡلِیۡ لَہُمۡ ؕ اِنَّ کَیۡدِیۡ مَتِیۡنٌ ﴿۴۵﴾ اَمۡ تَسۡـَٔلُہُمۡ اَجۡرًا فَہُمۡ مِّنۡ مَّغۡرَمٍ مُّثۡقَلُوۡنَ ۚ﴿۴۶﴾ اَمۡ عِنۡدَہُمُ الۡغَیۡبُ فَہُمۡ یَکۡتُبُوۡنَ ﴿۴۷﴾

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فَاصْبِرْ لِحُكْمِ رَبِّكَ وَلَا تَكُنْ كَصَاحِبِ الْحُوْتِ ۘ اِذْ نَادٰى وَهُوَ مَكْظُوْمٌ ﴿۴۸﴾ لَوْلَآ اَنْ تَدٰرَكَهٗ نِعْمَةٌ مِّنْ رَّبِّهٖ لَنُبِذَ بِالْعَرَآءِ وَ
هُوَ مَذْمُوْمٌ ﴿۴۹﴾ فَاجْتَبٰهُ رَبُّهٗ فَجَعَلَهٗ مِنَ الصّٰلِحِيْنَ ﴿۵۰﴾ وَاِنْ يَّكَادُ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا لَيُزْلِقُوْنَكَ بِاَبْصَارِهِمْ لَمَّا سَمِعُوا الذِّكْرَ
وَيَقُوْلُوْنَ اِنَّهٗ لَمَجْنُوْنٌ ﴿۵۱﴾ وَمَا هُوَ اِلَّا ذِكْرٌ لِّلْعٰلَمِيْنَ ﴿۵۲﴾

In the name of God, the Most Gracious, the Ever-Merciful.

This is Sūrah Nūn. By the pen and by that which they write that you are not, by the grace of your Lord, possessed, and indeed for you is a reward unending, and you are of a lofty character. So, soon you shall see and they shall also see with which of the groups is the one who has been led away. Your Lord only best knows, those who have strayed from His path and those who are rightly guided. (1-7)

So, give no heed to these rejecters. They desire that you be flexible, then they will also become flexible. And heed not every person who is a swearer of false oaths, is despicable, maker of evil gestures, who goes about sowing seeds of dissension, forbidder of good, transgressor, usurper of rights, cruel and moreover is rootless. This character is so because he has wealth and children. When Our revelations are recited to him, he cries out: "These are but tales of the ancients." Soon on his trunk will We brand him. (8-16)

We put them through a test, just as We put the owners of the orchard through a test when they swore that they would surely pick the fruit of their orchard in the morning and would not leave anything. Then, whilst they were asleep, a mover from your Lord moved through it in such a manner that it became like a crop harvested. At daybreak, they called out to one another: "Go early in the morning to your plantation if you are to pick its fruit." Then off they went whispering to one another: "No needy person should set foot in this orchard today." And they proceeded with resolve and determination. But when they saw it, they cried out: "Surely we have lost our way; in fact, we have been ruined." Said a somewhat balanced person among them: "Did I not tell you: 'why do you not glorify the Lord?"' Then they cried out: "Glory be to our Lord; indeed it is we who were the wrong-doers." Then they started blaming one another: "Woe to us." they cried. "We have been great transgressors. Perhaps our Lord will give us in its place a better orchard than it. To Him do we now turn." In such a way, shall the punishment come, and the punishment of the Hereafter shall be much greater than this. Would that these people only knew! (17-33)

Indeed, for the pious, there are gardens of bliss with their Lord. Should We equate the obedient with the wrongdoers? What is the matter with you? What is this judgement you make? Have you a scripture in which you read that you will have whatever you desire? Or have you oaths with Us binding till the Day of Judgement that you will have what you yourselves ordain? Ask them: "Who among them will take responsibility of this?" Do they have some associates? Let them produce these associates if what they say be true. (34-41)

They must remember the day when a great tumult will take place, and they will be

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called to bow in adoration and they will not be able to do so. Downcast shall be their looks; ignominy shall cover them. And they also used to be called to bow in adoration when they were normal. (42-43)

So, leave Me with those who are denying this Discourse. We are gradually bringing them from a place they know not. And I am giving them respite. Indeed, very truly powerful is My scheme. (44-45)

Are you demanding some payment from them so that they are burdened with its penalty? Or is it that they have knowledge of the Unseen; thus they are writing it down? So, with patience, wait for the judgement of your Lord and be not like the companion of the fish when he called His Lord in anguish. Had not the favour of His Lord found him, he would have remained in the wilderness in disgrace. So His Lord chose him and placed him among the righteous. (46-50)

And when these disbelievers hear the reminder, they look at you as if they would almost make you stumble with their eyes and say: "He is surely possessed." Yet, it is only a reminder to all mankind. (51-52)

Explanation

نٓ وَالْقَلَمِ وَمَا يَسْطُرُوْنَ ۝١[1]

Just as in the opening verse of Sūrah Qāf (50:1), the name of the *sūrah* is mentioned as Qāf, similarly in the opening verse of this *sūrah,* its name is mentioned as Nūn. According to linguistic principles of Arabic, the *mubtatadā'* (inchoative) is suppressed here, which I have revealed in the translation. While explaining the opening verses of Sūrah al-Baqarah, I have already alluded to the opinion of Imām Farāhī regarding the *hurūf-i muqaṭṭa'āt* (the abbreviated letters at the *sūrah* openings). According to him, these are names of their respective *sūrahs* and are used to signify some meaning. Though the meanings of most of these letters are now lost, however, some of them have survived to this day. In order to substantiate his theory, one of the letters he has cited is Nūn that still signifies its ancient meaning: fish. By naming this *sūrah* thus, the allusion is to the Prophet Jonah (sws) who had been swallowed by a fish. Thus, at the end of the *sūrah*, he is addressed as *ṣāḥib al-ḥūt* (companion of the fish). In verse 87 of Sūrah al-Anbiyā', he is also addressed as *dhū al-nūn* which has precisely the same meaning as *ṣāḥib al-ḥūt.*

The letter و (*waw*) here denotes an oath. I have explained many times earlier in this exegesis that in the Qur'ān, such oaths are meant to substantiate a claim(s). Here, as shall be presently explained, three claims are substantiated.

First, it is an utter idiocy of the opponents of the Prophet (sws) to call him a person possessed. He is not an insane person; in fact, by the grace of God, he is sanest of all people.

1. This is Sūrah Nūn. By the pen, and by that from which they write.

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Second, if these opponents think that all the efforts of the Prophet (sws) will be short-lived, then this is a false notion. There is unending reward for him both in this world and in that to come.

Third, he possesses a lofty character; hence those who are ignoring him by regarding him to be a poet or a mad person are only inviting their doom.

At various instances, the Qur'ān has presented itself to substantiate these claims. Thus, there is a strong indication that the verse نٓ وَالْقَلَمِ وَمَا يَسْطُرُوْنَ actually refers to the Qur'ān. Moreover, there is a narrative from Mujāhid that the word "pen" refers to the pen with which the Qur'ān was being written and, the expression "that which they write" refers to the Qur'ān itself.[2]

It needs to be kept in mind that teaching by the pen is one of the greatest favours of the Almighty. Thus it is said in Sūrah al-'Alaq: اِقْرَأْ وَرَبُّكَ الْاَكْرَمُ. الَّذِیْ عَلَّمَ بِالْقَلَمِ. عَلَّمَ الْاِنْسَانَ مَا لَمْ يَعْلَمْ (٩٦: ٣-٥) (Read and the fact is that your Lord is the most Bounteous who taught by the pen. He taught man what he knew not, (96:3-5)). Earlier prophets of God orally taught their followers and it was very difficult to preserve those oral teachings. They would soon become adulterated or would be erased from memories. In order to protect religion from this danger, the Almighty taught man the use of the pen and writing. This made it possible for him to gain knowledge through writing instead of gaining it orally. Thus, first of all, he was given the ten commandments of the Torah written on stone tablets. The teachings of the later prophets were also written. Finally, the Qur'ān, the last word of God, was preserved in such an elaborate manner that there could remain no possibility of any alteration in it till the Day of Judgement.

It is because of this importance of the pen that the Almighty has sworn by it. In my opinion, it does not refer to any specific pen; it refers to all the written record of divine teachings which was preserved through the pen ie. The Torah, the Psalms and the Injīl etc. The teachings of these sacred scriptures also attest to the prophethood of Muḥammad (sws), and also found in them are indubitable testimonies to his advent. I have already explained these earlier in this exegesis.

Contextual indications show that the words وَمَا يَسْطُرُوْنَ (what they are writing) refer to the Qur'ān, which was being revealed at that time and was being written by the Companions (rta). After an oath sworn by the previous scriptures, this is an oath sworn by the Qur'ān. It has been presented as evidence to the veracity, civility and the prophethood of Muḥammad (sws). What is implied is that, the exaltedness and loftiness of the discourse of the person who is presenting it shows that he is not a poet or a person possessed; he is, in fact, a messenger of God.

It should be kept in consideration that in response to such allegations of the disbelievers, the Almighty has generally presented the Qur'ān before them so that they

2. Abū Ja'far Muhammad Ibn Jarīr al-Tabarī, *Jāmi' al-Bayān 'an Tā'wīl Āy al-Qur'ān*, 1st ed, vol. 29, (Beirut Dār ihyā' al-turāth al-'arabī, 2001), 23.

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can see and justly judge whether such words can be produced by some poet, soothsayer or mad person or whether they originate from God.

مَآ اَنۡتَ بِنِعۡمَةِ رَبِّكَ بِمَجۡنُوۡنٍ ۚ﴿۲﴾[3]

This is the complement of the oath: all previous scriptures, and this Qur'ān which is being written bear witness that the Prophet (sws) is not a person possessed; he is, in fact, imparting to people the same teachings as were imparted by all other prophets of God from Adam (sws) to Jesus (sws) upon whose veracity history bears witness. If these self-styled intellectuals are calling him a person possessed, he should not feel sad; he is not insane; in fact, by the grace of his Lord, he is the sanest of all people. It is only that these reckless intellectuals have lost their senses and are not able to distinguish between the sane and the insane.

The reason that the Quraysh called the Prophet (sws) mad was that their leaders were totally unable to understand from where the punishment with which he was emphatically and vehemently warning them as if he had seen it with his very eyes, would arrive. They were worried that the extra-ordinary conviction found in his tone, the superhuman concern and anxiety found in his preaching endeavours and the heart-melting affection and sympathy found in his manner of reminding people was influencing the masses greatly. For this reason, they wanted to convince people that his anxiety and concern were not because there was any imminent danger of them being punished and that the Almighty had actually sent him to forewarn them of this punishment. The fact was that he was afflicted with hallucinations which made him imagine it coming from all sides. In order to further strengthen their claim, they would add that, he was under some magical spell, which had mentally deranged him and caused such nonsensical conversation from him.

وَاِنَّ لَكَ لَاَجۡرًا غَيۡرَ مَمۡنُوۡنٍ ۚ﴿۳﴾[4]

This verse states positively what was said negatively earlier on: foolish are they who, regarding the Prophet (sws) to be crazy, await his devastation through the vicissitudes of time. It is they who, on the contrary, are destined to be devastated; for the Prophet (sws), there is an everlasting reward; these arrogant people whose affluence has made them proud, are facing an imminent punishment, and soon they will face the consequences of this conceit. Contrary to them, the Prophet (sws) will receive a never ending reward for his adherence to the truth.

The word غَيۡرَ مَمۡنُوۡنٍ means "unending." Some people have interpreted it differently; however, this interpretation is not only against linguistic principles of Arabic, it is also

3. That, by the grace of your Lord, you are not possessed.
4. And indeed, for you is a reward unending.

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against other parallel verses of the Qur'ān.

وَاِنَّكَ لَعَلٰى خُلُقٍ عَظِيْمٍ ﴿٤﴾[5]

The Prophet (sws) is addressed and told that just as prophets before him had exemplary character, he too, has a lofty character. In fact, this character of his is a conclusive answer to those who, by regarding him to be a poet, a soothsayer or a madman, want to convince themselves and their masses that soon his influence will die away.

At many places in the Qur'ān, the lofty character of the Prophet (sws) is presented to substantiate the truth of his mission. In Sūrah al-Shu'arā', the moral depletion of poets and soothsayers, their intellectual ramblings and the lack of correspondence between what they claim and what they practice is discussed in detail, and those people who regard the Prophet (sws) to be among this ignoble group are rebuked. They are asked: what is the relationship of the exalted character of the Prophet with the character of these soothsayers and poets whose inner and outer selves are equally dreadful?

فَسَتُبْصِرُ وَيُبْصِرُوْنَ ﴿٥﴾ بِاَيِّيْكُمُ الْمَفْتُوْنُ ﴿٦﴾[6]

This is an assurance to the Prophet (sws) and a threat to his opponents. If they want to belittle his mission by regarding him to be a person possessed, he should show patience. Very soon, he shall see and they shall also see which of the two are with the person who has been led away: the believers who are led by the Prophet (sws), or the Quraysh are who led by Abū Lahab and Abū Jahal. The implicatio is that, the time of judgement is near, and soon reality will manifest itself. Very soon, all will see who had been led away by Satan and had thereby ruined their nation, and who had been shielded from the onslaughts of Satan and had led his followers to success, both in this world and in that to come.

Here, a law of God, which has been mentioned at numerous places in the Qur'ān, should be kept in mind: the messengers of God decide the fate of their respective nations in this very world. Just as the assurance for the believers and the warning for the disbelievers found in the verse relates to the Hereafter, it also relates to this world. This is merely a restatement of what was said at the end of the previous *sūrah* in the words: فَسَتَعْلَمُوْنَ مَنْ هُوَ فِيْ ضَلٰلٍ مُّبِيْنٍ (٦٧:٢٩) (soon, you shall know who is in manifest error, (67:29)).

In the expression بِاَيِّيْكُمُ الْمَفْتُوْنُ the letter ب apparently seems incongruous with تُبْصِرُ and يُبْصِرُوْنَ. However, as per a common linguistic principle of Arabic, the word يُبْصِرُوْنَ encompasses the meaning of يَعْلَمُوْنَ and, if I remember correctly, al-Zamakhsharī also holds this view and I regard this view to be in accordance with linguistic principles of

5. And you are of a lofty character.
6. So, soon you shall see and they shall also see with which of the groups is the one who has been led away.

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Arabic.[7] The word بِاَيِّيكُمُ means بِاَيِّ الحِزبَيْن.

The word مَفْتُوْنُ does not mean مَجْنُوْن (mad). It connotes its original meaning, ie. a person who has been led away by this world and by Satan. In other words, the Qur'ān says that, those who are lured away in this manner are in fact مَجْنُوْن (mad), and the group whose reins are controlled by such madmen finally ends up in Hell.

اِنَّ رَبَّكَ هُوَاَعْلَمُ بِمَنْ ضَلَّ عَنْ سَبِيْلِهٖ ۖ وَهُوَاَعْلَمُ بِالْمُهْتَدِيْنَ ﴿۷﴾[8]

This is a further emphasis and substantiation of what is said above. Since the Almighty knows full well those who are guided and those who have deviated from this guidance, He will deal with each of these in the manner they are worthy of. It is not possible that those worthy of humiliation will always be blessed with a life of honour and success, nor is it possible that those worthy of success always remain afflicted with the cruelty of the oppressors. This world is not a place where people are not being watched. It is the creation of a creator who has full knowledge of all things. It is essential that it culminate in a Day of Judgement. The implication is that the Prophet (sws) should trust God; He will not deal in the same manner with the righteous and the wrongdoers.

فَلَا تُطِعِ الْمُكَذِّبِيْنَ ﴿۸﴾[9]

When the reality is what has been stated above, then the Prophet (sws) should not pay attention to the nonsensical talk of those who deny the punishment of rejecting the Day of Judgement and those who deny the Day of Judgement itself. If these people have no fear of both these punishments, then let them be as they are. If they are satisfied that if ever the Day of Judgement comes, they will be blessed with the same favours as they have been blessed with here, let them remain in the trance of this dream. This world is not revolving around their desires; it has been created by a wise and powerful being, and it is essential that, one day, His wisdom and justice manifest in their ultimate forms.

The word اِطَاعَةٌ here means "to be affected or influenced by something." It is used in this sense in both the Qur'ān and in classical Arabic.

وَدُّوْا لَوْ تُدْهِنُ فَيُدْهِنُوْنَ ﴿۹﴾[10]

This verse unveils the real reason the Prophet's enemies are opposing him for. In

7. Al-Zamakhshari, *Al-Kashshāf*, vol. 4, 590.

8. Your Lord only best knows those who have strayed from His path and those who are rightly guided.

9. So, give no heed to these rejecters.

10. They desire that you be flexible, then, they will also become flexible.

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other words, they have no doubt in the veracity of what he says; however, accepting it is against their desires; for this reason they are trying to vehemently pressurize him to soften his stance so that as a result, he accepts some of their demands and they accept some of his. In this manner, a compromise is reached. The verse thus brings to light the fact that their opposition is not based on any sincerity with their own religion; it is merely an attempt to bargain their position with the Prophet (sws). As long as they have hope of succeeding in these tactics, they will continue with their efforts; however, as soon as they realize that this is a lost cause they will lose the will and determination to continue with these.

Here, a question arises on the language pattern used by the Qur'ān. According to linguistic principles, the verse should have been thus: وَدُّوْا لَوْ تُدْهِنُ فَيُدْهِنُوْا; however, the word used is فَيُدْهِنُوْنَ. The answer to this question is that a different style has been adopted here; the inchoative (*mubtadā'*) has been suppressed. The sentence actually was فَهُمْ يُدْهِنُوْنَ. The meaning would then be: it is their desire that the Prophet (sws) softens his stance and then they too will soften their attitude. Examples of this style can be seen in the Qur'ān.

وَلَا تُطِعْ كُلَّ حَلَّافٍ مَّهِيْنٍ ۙ﴿۱۰﴾[11]

This verse is co-ordinated to the previous verse, and once again the Prophet (sws) is emphatically warned that he should not pay attention to such people. The verse does not refer to someone in particular, as has been generally understood by people. This and the subsequent verses portray a graphic picture of the moral degradation and depletion of the leadership of the Quraysh. The purpose is to compare the lofty character of the Prophet (sws) alluded to in verse four, with the character of such leaders of the Quraysh as Abū Lahab, Walīd ibn al-Mughīrah, Abū Jahal and Akhnas ibn Shurayq. By this comparison, everyone can decide what fate each will meet.

The fact that these verses do not portray the character of someone in particular and, in fact, depict the character of the whole leadership of the Quraysh is evident from various aspects.

Firstly, this verse is co-ordinated to the previous verse "pay no attention to the disbelievers," and the word "disbelievers," of course does not refer to a specific person; the occasion of this word shows that it refers to all the leadership of the Quraysh.

Secondly, the word كُلّ (every) shows that the character under discussion is that of the complete group and not of a specific individual.

Thirdly, in the coming verses, the word used is بَلَوْنَاهُمْ which obviously has a plural pronoun, which shows that its antecedent is not an individual but a group of individuals.

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11. And heed not every person who is a swearer of false oaths, is despicable.

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Fourthly, the character traits which are portrayed here relate to the complete leadership of the Quraysh; if they are made to relate to a single individual, then this will require a lot of artificial effort.

Once these principles are understood, let us deliberate on the words of the verse.

The word حَلَّافٍ refers to a person who swears a lot. I have already explained in this exegesis that this word never comes in the positive sense. Moreover, here, it is qualified by the word مَّهِينٍ (despicable). Obviously, only that person will swear a lot who has no regard for his own self-esteem. People who have an immoral or blameworthy character, always remain in doubt because of their inferiority complex that, unless they swear, others will not be convinced of what they are saying. Thus, it is mentioned at many instances in the Qur'ān that the hypocrites would swear to camouflage their character. As far as the leadership of the Quraysh is concerned, they could not point out the slightest blemish in the Prophet's character and had nothing to say against Islam, based on arguments. The only means they had to fool their masses was to swear profusely that, God forbid, he is a poet or a soothsayer, a mad person and someone who imputes lies to God.

هَمَّازٍ مَّشَّآءٍۭ بِنَمِيمٍ ﴿١١﴾[12]

The word هَمَّازٍ is an emphatic form of همز and means "maker of evil gestures." Making such evil gestures and verbal caricatures is a special trait of those who want to belittle someone in the eyes of others. Body movements, eyes and eye-brows are also employed for this purpose as well as words and sentences. Examples of the gestures and mocking sentences, with which the Quraysh used to target the Prophet (sws) and poor Muslims, can be seen in the Qur'ān, and I have also explained them at the relevant places of this exegesis. Such traits are also referred to in وَيْلٌ لِّكُلِّ هُمَزَةٍ لُّمَزَةٍ (١٠٤:١) (woe to every back-biting slanderer, (104:1)). The arrogant do not have the force of arguments to support their views; so they try to defeat the cause of truth with whatever evil means they can lay their hands on. In reality, how can such feeble weapons counter the razor-sharp sword of the truth?

The words نَمِيمَةٌ and نَمِيمٌ refer to sowing seeds of dissension and back-biting. This is a reference to the activity of horse-trading and causing disgruntlement in people with which the leadership of the Quraysh would remain pre-occupied day and night, and for this they would use the weapon of back-biting. This was their greatest means of causing dissent and disunity among people.

It was through this means that they were also opposing Islam. They were vehemently engaged in spreading rumours and misconceptions among Muslims in order to cause dissension between them. The purpose was to destroy the seeds of fraternity and brotherhood sown by Islam and to try to make people form absolutely

12. Maker of evil gestures, who goes about sowing seeds of dissension.

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unfounded bad opinions about one another.

مَّنَّاعٍ لِّلْخَيْرِ مُعْتَدٍ اَثِيْمٍ ﴿١٢﴾[13]

It is evident from the previous verses that the whole edifice of their leadership stood on lies, back-biting and humiliating others. In this verse, it is explained that these die-hard enemies of virtue who violate the bounds set by God are also ones who usurp the rights of human beings.

The words مَنَّاعٍ لِّلْخَيْرِ refer in general to people who stop others from doing any kind of virtuous deed; however, here a special reference is to their stinginess: they neither have the heart to spend even a penny on the poor, nor can bear seeing others spend on them; they want that others too, should become misers like themselves so that they are able to hide their own miserliness. The Qur'ān has explained from various aspects this trait of misers that they lead others to miserliness also so that their own meanness remains concealed.

The words مُعْتَدٍ اَثِيْمٍ imply that they usurp the rights of others and also do not fulfill the rights of others imposed on them. The word اِعْتَدَا refers to the first type of sin and the word اِثْمٌ to the second type. Thus, these people are not only misers and want others to be misers too, they also have these traits.

عُتُلٍّ بَعْدَ ذٰلِكَ زَنِيْمٍ ﴿١٣﴾[14]

The word عُتُلّ means "cruel and ruthless." A person who is stingy, shall necessarily be cruel. This is only the inner aspect of the traits mentioned earlier. It is about these people that the Qur'ān has said: اَرَءَيْتَ الَّذِىْ يُكَذِّبُ بِالدِّيْنِ. فَذٰلِكَ الَّذِىْ يَدُعُّ الْيَتِيْمَ.(۱۰۷:۱-۲) (have you seen the one who belies reward and punishment?! He it is who drives away the orphan, (103:1-2)).

The word زَنِيْمٍ is explained thus by lexicographers: الملحق بقوم ليس منهم و لا يحتاجون إليه (a person who associates himself with the lineage of a clan whereas he actually does not belong to it and the clan also feels no need of him).[15] This word has been formed from زنمة, which refers to glands that hang from the necks of goats, and their status is that of a redundant limb of the body. It is mentioned in some narratives that Akhnas ibn Shurayq belonged to the Thaqīf tribe, but he claimed to belong to the Zahrah tribe. Similarly, it is known that al-Walīd ibn Mughīrah claimed to belong to the Quraysh, although he did not belong to it. People who want to associate themselves with superior tribes regarding

13. Forbidder of good, transgressor, usurper of rights.

14. Cruel, and moreover, is rootless.

15. The Arabic text quoted is close to what is found in *Al-Mu'jam al-wasīt.* See: Ibrāhīm Muṣṭafā, Aḥmad al-Zayyāt, Ḥāmid 'Abd al-Qādir, Muḥammad al-Najjār, *Al-Mu'jam al-wasīṭ* (n.p.: Dar al-da 'wah, n.d.), 403.

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their own lineage to be worthless, are generally show-offs. Such people have a habit of flattery and sycophancy and putting up a false show of national pride to earn credibility in the clan. Thus, such "impure" Qurayshites were specially in the forefront in opposing the Prophet (sws). To show their deep affiliation to their clan, they would try to instigate their people against the Prophet (sws) by alleging that his preaching was causing dissensions in the unity of the Quraysh. It is such show-offs that the Qur'ān has pointed out and said that besides immoral traits which these leaders have, there are some parasites who claim to be more loyal than the real members of the clan and have become the custodians of their traditions of the age of *jāhilliyah*. Their evil nature has been further incited by more evil. The Qur'ān, here, has harshly commented in this manner on a character trait, which necessarily finds expression in people who are afflicted with the malady of inferiority complex and lack of self-confidence.

اَنۡ كَانَ ذَا مَالٍ وَّ بَنِيۡنَ ﴿۱۴﴾[16]

Mentioned in this verse is the reason for such a character. This verse is very subtle: if God had blessed them with wealth and children, they should have shown gratitude and obedience to Him and should have become the proponents of the truth revealed by Him; on the contrary, they became ingrates and utterly defiant. It is mentioned at many instances in the Qur'ān in different styles that the purpose of God in blessing people with favours is to test them, whether they become grateful or being overcome with arrogance, start following Satan. It is in this same trial that the Almighty put these people through, but they failed in it badly and their blessings became a means of God's wrath.

اِذَا تُتۡلٰى عَلَيۡهِ اٰيٰتُنَا قَالَ اَسَاطِيۡرُ الۡاَوَّلِيۡنَ ﴿۱۵﴾[17]

This is a portrayal of the arrogance and haughtiness with which these people were overcome. Instead of seeking a lesson from nations who had been destroyed, because they too had been similarly inflicted with arrogance and haughtiness, they make fun of them when their accounts are mentioned to them. They regard them to be ancient stories, which have no link with the present. What they implied was that neither were they willing to accept the narrator of such tales to be a prophet, nor would they be over-awed by such tales; what relation have these tales to rejecting or accepting a prophet of God, they contended.

سَنَسِمُهٗ عَلَى الۡخُرۡطُوۡمِ ﴿۱۶﴾[18]

This is the punishment these people will encounter in the Hereafter for their pride

16. This character is so because he has wealth and children.
17. When Our revelations are recited to him he cries out: These are but tales of the ancients.
18. Soon, on his trunk will We brand him.

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and arrogance. The word خُرْطُوْمِ means "trunk." Here it is used as a metaphor for the noses of such people because they were opposing the Prophet (sws) only to keep their noses high. If someone becomes so infatuated with keeping his nose high that he is ready to deny the most obvious of truths, this means that his nose is not merely a nose, he has actually enlarged and inflated it to become a trunk. It is for this crime that soon the Almighty will brand him on his trunk and everyone will see this humiliation he will go through. This is a very apt expression of arrogance and its punishment; its subtlety and eloquence are beyond words.

اِنَّا بَلَوْنٰهُمْ كَمَا بَلَوْنَآ اَصْحٰبَ الْجَنَّةِ ۚ اِذْ اَقْسَمُوْا لَيَصْرِمُنَّهَا مُصْبِحِيْنَ ﴿۱۷﴾[19]

In order to highlight the hollowness of the character of the leadership mentioned above, a parable is recounted here to them. In it, they are shown that their authority which has made them so conceited and proud that they are making fun of the warnings of the Prophet (sws) has no foundation. Whenever the Almighty wishes, He can deprive them of it in the blink of an eye. At that time, they will mourn their wretchedness, and will even repent before Him, but this will be of no use to them.

The antecedent of the pronoun هُمْ (they) in بَلَوْنٰهُمْ obviously refers to the people whose character has been discussed earlier. This alone, as has been indicated earlier, is a very clear indication of the fact that this character is not that of a specific individual; it is that of the total leadership of the Quraysh. Had only one person's character been discussed, the pronoun would have been singular.

Similarly, another important point relating to the language should be kept in consideration. In the expression اَصْحٰبَ الْجَنَّةِ, the word الْجَنَّةِ has an *alif lām* which apparently means that the reference is to some specific people of the orchard. The defining *alif lāms* or demonstrative nouns (الَّذِی or الَّتِی) which occur in parables are not meant to point to some specific entity, as has been explained in this exegesis at a number of occasions. Their purpose is only to portray the overall situation so that the reader gets to know the complete picture. For this reason, there is no need to go after finding out the incident that relates to the owners of a particular orchard in Yemen or in Sana, as has been done by our exegetes. This is merely a picture of the mentality and fate of the leadership of the Quraysh portrayed in such a manner, that no aspect remains hidden.

The words اِذْ اَقْسَمُوْا لَيَصْرِمُنَّهَا مُصْبِحِيْنَ refer to the confidence which the people of the orchard had in their success. They were very satisfied and content that their orchard had braved various phases of weather change and had become safe and secure from all calamities. In their opinion, the only thing left for them to do was to go there the next day and pick its fruit and bring it home. Consequently, they swore to express this

19. We put them through a test, just as We put the owners of the orchard through a test, when they swore that they would surely pick the fruit of their orchard in the morning.

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intention that the next morning they would definitely harvest its fruit.

وَلَا يَسْتَثْنُوْنَ ﴿١٨﴾[20]

Generally, people have interpreted this verse to mean that, while swearing, these people did not utter the words اِنْ شَآءَ اللّٰه (if God wills). In other words, they were so sure of their success that they could not in the slightest think of anything that could cause any impediment in this. Although all the exegetes are unanimous in this interpretation, I personally am not convinced of it. Although the word اِسْتِثْنَاء can be possibly translated thus, however, the style adopted is not appropriate to convey the derived meaning. In such a case, instead of saying وَلَا يَسْتَثْنُوْنَ the words should have been وَلَمْ يَسْتَثْنُوْا or something similar. The word إِسْتِثْنَاء is not a very explicit word for saying اِنْ شَآءَ اللّٰه. If it has to imply this meaning, then there must be some contextual indication for it. Here, we find no such satisfactory indication.

In my opinion, the word is used in its literal meaning. They swore that they would necessarily pick the fruit of the orchard and would not leave any of them. In other words, what they swore was that they would pick all the fruit and leave nothing for the poor. Leaving some fruit for the poor and needy is a common age old custom found in generous and pious people. It is mentioned in the Bible:

> Nor shall you glean your vineyard, nor shall you gather the fallen fruit of your vineyard; you shall leave them for the needy and for the stranger. I am the LORD your God. (Leviticus, 19:10).

It is while keeping this known tradition in mind that these people swore that they would not follow this tradition. They swore to lay emphasis on their statement, otherwise such swearing was not needed in the statement.

Since, in this parable, the character of the leaders of the Quraysh has been highlighted by calling them مَنَّاعٍ لِلْخَيْرِ (forbidder of good), عُتُلٍّ (cruel) and اَثِيْمٍ (usurper of rights), the oath sworn by the owners of the orchard is specially mentioned here so that the similarity between the two is highlighted. Readers should recall to their minds the picture of the stinginess of Abū Lahab and his associates portrayed by the Qur'ān at various places.

فَطَافَ عَلَيْهَا طَآئِفٌ مِّنْ رَّبِّكَ وَهُمْ نَآئِمُوْنَ ﴿١٩﴾ فَاَصْبَحَتْ كَالصَّرِيْمِ ﴿٢٠﴾[21]

What happened in the orchard is attributed to God and this alludes to two things: firstly, the calamity arrived without the slightest expectation that it would, and

20. And would not leave anything.

21. Then, whilst they were asleep, a mover from your Lord moved through it in such a manner that it became like a crop harvested.

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secondly, it was so devastating in nature that it miraculously routed the orchard to nothingness in the blink of an eye.

The Prophet (sws) is addressed in the words مِّنۡ رَّبِّكَ (from your Lord) to assure him. In the initial verses of this *sūrah*, the Prophet (sws) is told that if today he warns these people of God's punishment, they regard him to be a person possessed, since they see themselves in smooth circumstances. They fail to understand from where this punishment would descend on them. This parable has shown them that the punishment of God comes in such a manner that all of man's schemes which he devises with the conviction of pledges and oaths are rendered to ruin when he wakes up to embark upon executing them.

فَتَنَادَوۡا مُصۡبِحِيۡنَ ﴿۲۱﴾ اَنِ اغۡدُوۡا عَلٰى حَرۡثِكُمۡ اِنۡ كُنۡتُمۡ صٰرِمِيۡنَ ﴿۲۲﴾[22]

The word حَرۡثٌ actually means "sown land;" here, it refers to the orchard mentioned earlier. The reason for this is, as has already been indicated before that in Arabia within orchards, there were pieces of land in which various crops would be sown. For this reason, both the word orchard (جَنَّةٌ) and sown land (حَرۡثٌ) are used for such areas.

The words اِنۡ كُنۡتُمۡ صٰرِمِيۡنَ (if you are to pick its fruit) are to challenge and convince their associates. What is implied is that if they want to carry out this task, they should not waste time and immediately proceed to the place; otherwise, they might incur loss.

فَانۡطَلَقُوۡا وَهُمۡ يَتَخَافَتُوۡنَ ﴿۲۳﴾ اَنۡ لَّا يَدۡخُلَنَّهَا الۡيَوۡمَ عَلَيۡكُمۡ مِّسۡكِيۡنٌ ﴿۲۴﴾[23]

This is another portrayal of their stinginess. Earlier on, the words وَلَا يَسۡتَثۡنُوۡنَ (and would not leave anything) also referred to this despicable trait in them.

وَّغَدَوۡا عَلٰى حَرۡدٍ قٰدِرِيۡنَ ﴿۲۵﴾[24]

The word حَرۡدٍ means "enthusiasm, freshness, resolve and hurried-gait." The implication is that they were fully prepared to protect themselves from being followed by the poor and needy, and marched off to the orchard with grit and resolve. The word قٰدِرِيۡنَ portrays their inner confidence and determination that soon they would be able to realize their aim: the fruit was ripe to be picked and no one could interfere to stop them; the only fear was from the poor and that too, had been taken care of.

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22. At daybreak, they called out to one another: "Go early in the morning to your plantation if you are to pick its fruit."

23. Then, off they went whispering to one another: "No needy person should set foot in this orchard today."

24. And they proceeded with resolve and determination.

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فَلَمَّا رَاَوْهَا قَالُوْٓا اِنَّا لَضَآلُّوْنَ ۝٢٦ بَلْ نَحْنُ مَحْرُوْمُوْنَ ۝٢٧[25]

Such was the extent of devastation met by the orchard that at first sight they were not able to recognize it. They thought that they had lost their way in the dark but they soon realized what had happened. All their desires and wishes were dashed to the ground. Their orchard was ruined and they were deprived of this prized possession.

قَالَ اَوْسَطُهُمْ اَلَمْ اَقُلْ لَّكُمْ لَوْلَا تُسَبِّحُوْنَ ۝٢٨[26]

The word اَوْسَطُهُمْ refers to the most upright and fair person among them. Even the most evil of societies has some noble souls who stop people from their ill-ways, whether those sunk in oblivion hear them or not. A similar person was found among them who would, at various instances, remind them to be heedful of God and to glorify Him. The word تَسْبِيْحٌ is very comprehensive in nature and encompasses remembering the Almighty as well as worshipping Him. Initially, his exhortations were met with a deaf ear, but later, when they saw the consequences of their attitude, they realized that God was a reality and that this person was not wrong in his counsel.

قَالُوْا سُبْحٰنَ رَبِّنَآ اِنَّا كُنَّا ظٰلِمِيْنَ ۝٢٩[27]

These words were their instant reaction. They realized that they were so inebriated with their success that they forgot the majesty of God, and if someone tried to remind them of it, they never paid heed.

This confession is similar to the confession made by the Pharaoh when he and his army were about to drown. Such a repentance is too late to be accepted and is of no avail.

فَاَقْبَلَ بَعْضُهُمْ عَلٰى بَعْضٍ يَّتَلَاوَمُوْنَ ۝٣٠ قَالُوْا يٰوَيْلَنَآ اِنَّا كُنَّا طٰغِيْنَ ۝٣١[28]

After meeting this fate, everyone started the blame game. People, who are not sensible, blame one another when they see the consequences of their foolishness, even though all are to be equally blamed for the mishap. The only difference is that some lead the way in creating such disorder and others blindly follow them. At last, they all have to confess that all of them are responsible for the crime.

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25. But when they saw it, they cried out: "Surely we have lost our way; in fact, we have been ruined."

26. Said a somewhat balanced person among them: "Did I not tell you: why do you not glorify the Lord?"

27. Then, they cried out: Glory be to our Lord; indeed it is we who were the wrongdoers.

28. Then, they started blaming one another: "Woe to us. they cried. We have been great transgressors."

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عَسٰى رَبُّنَآ اَنْ يُّبْدِلَنَا خَيْرًا مِّنْهَآ اِنَّآ اِلٰى رَبِّنَا رٰغِبُوْنَ ﴿٣٢﴾[29]

This is what they said later after blaming one another.

Here, the Qur'ān has not commented upon whether their hope was fulfilled or not. However, as per divine practice, people who repent after the time for repentance expires are not entertained by the Almighty.

For the purpose that this parable has been recounted to the Quraysh, a similar parable occurs in verses 32-43 of Sūrah al-Kahf.

كَذٰلِكَ الْعَذَابُ ؕ وَلَعَذَابُ الْاٰخِرَةِ اَكْبَرُ ۘ لَوْ كَانُوْا يَعْلَمُوْنَ ﴿٣٣﴾[30]

After recounting the parable, the Quraysh are warned that the punishment with which the Messenger of God is threatening them will come to them in a similar manner. Today, they are engrossed in their pleasures and have no fear of God seizing them. If the Prophet (sws) is warning them of this danger, they call him a mad person. They are not able to understand from where this punishment will descend on them. The fact is that it will come to them from where they cannot even imagine. At that time, they will encounter something very similar to what the owners of the orchard encountered; however, their wailings at that time will be absolutely useless to them.

The words كَذٰلِكَ الْعَذَابُ point to the punishment, which, according to an unalterable divine practice, comes to a people who reject their Messenger after he has conclusively communicated the truth to it. This punishment, as I have pointed out at several places, decides the fate of such people. After that they will face the punishment of the Hereafter, which will be much greater than this punishment. The messengers of God warned their people of both these types of punishment.

The words لَوْ كَانُوْا يَعْلَمُوْنَ express yearning and sorrow: these foolish and reckless people regard the Hereafter to be improbable, even though it is inevitable, and the punishment it will bring is very horrible; only if these people cared to know and understand.

اِنَّ لِلْمُتَّقِيْنَ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ جَنّٰتِ النَّعِيْمِ ﴿٣٤﴾[31]

After a delineation of the fate of the arrogant, mentioned in this verse is the reward for the God-fearing (مُتَّقِيْنَ). For people who led their lives in this world while remaining fearful of their accountability in the Hereafter, there are gardens of bliss with their Lord. The God-fearing are mentioned in parallel to the arrogant, who were so deeply inebriated with their worldly successes that this had left them unafraid of

29. Perhaps our Lord will give us in its place a better orchard than it. To Him do we now turn.

30. In such a way, shall the punishment come, and the punishment of the Hereafter shall be much greater than this. Would that these people only knew!

31. Indeed for the pious, there are gardens of bliss with their Lord.

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God's grasp and the punishment of the Hereafter. From this contrast, one can gauge who the God-fearing are: they are people who have not been lured away by the pleasures of this world; they are fully aware of the reality.

اَفَنَجۡعَلُ الۡمُسۡلِمِيۡنَ كَالۡمُجۡرِمِيۡنَ ﴿۳۵﴾[32]

Mentioned in this verse is the reason for which the God-fearing will be awarded such gardens of bliss. It is said that this is but a natural requisite of God's justice and mercy. If this does not happen, it will mean that to the Creator of this world the righteous and the wrongdoers, the loyal and the traitors, the believers and the disbelievers are equal. This obviously conflicts with the higher attributes of God. How can good and evil be equal in His eyes?

مَا لَكُمۡ ۟ كَيۡفَ تَحۡكُمُوۡنَ ﴿۳۶﴾[33]

Amazement is expressed on the attitude of the arrogant. The implication of these questions is that if they do not believe in the accountability of the Hereafter, and that the only life is the life of this world which will either continue forever or end one day, then this means that they regard the Creator to be devoid of the attributes of justice and mercy, Who does not care whether people are pious or impious. If this is their verdict, they should think how far away it is from sense and reason. What a great allegation they make on the Creator, Whose providence, mercy, power and wisdom is borne witness to by every speck and object of this universe.

It is obvious from this question of the Qur'ān that human intellect and nature do not accept this verdict. If some accept this verdict, then this can only mean two things: either they are merely deceiving their intellect while being helpless before their desires and negate their nature, or they have perverted both their intellect and nature.

اَمۡ لَكُمۡ كِتٰبٌ فِيۡهِ تَدۡرُسُوۡنَ ﴿۳۷﴾ اِنَّ لَكُمۡ فِيۡهِ لَمَا تَخَيَّرُوۡنَ ﴿۳۸﴾[34]

This is another scathing criticism on another baseless desire of the Quraysh: they claimed that in the first place there was no such thing as the Hereafter, and, if ever it was going to come, they would be blessed with even more than what they had in the world. They were inflicted with the misconception that if they were not favourites of God, how could they have been blessed with such political and social leadership; so, they contended, that if they were favourites of God, they would be given even more in the Hereafter. It is on this misconception that these verses address them, and ask what had led them to this misunderstanding and whether they had a scripture from God

32. Should We equate the obedient with those who transgress?
33. What is the matter with you? What is this judgement you make?
34. Have you a scripture in which you read that you will have whatever you desire?

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which guaranteed that all their desires would be fulfilled. The implication of these questions is that, these desires which they nurture in their hearts have no basis in sense and reason; yes, if they have a divine scripture in support of this claim, they should present it.

اَمۡ لَكُمۡ اَيۡمَانٌ عَلَيۡنَا بَالِغَةٌ اِلٰى يَوۡمِ الۡقِيٰمَةِ ۙ اِنَّ لَكُمۡ لَمَا تَحۡكُمُوۡنَ ﴿۳۹﴾[35]

The answer to this question, of course, has to be in the negative. So when this is so, on what basis do they vainly claim that neither can anyone touch them here in this world, nor will they be accountable in the Hereafter?

Here, it should remain clear that the promises made by the Almighty with nations regarding their success in the Hereafter, are conditional to them adhering to faith and doing righteous deeds and to the fulfillment of covenants pledged with Him through His messengers. He has never made any promise with any nation abiding till the Day of Judgement. The covenant made by the Almighty with both branches of Abraham's progeny regarding leadership in this world is mentioned both in the Torah and in the Qur'ān. It is absolutely evident from it that this covenant does not relate to people who become wrongdoers by breaking the promise of God. After Abraham (sws) successfully passed the trial of Ishmael's sacrifice, the Almighty gave him glad tidings of being given the leadership of the world in the words: اِنِّیۡ جَاعِلُكَ لِلنَّاسِ اِمَامًا (۱۲۴:۲) (I will appoint you the leader of mankind, (2:124)). Abraham (sws) then asked him: وَمِنۡ ذُرِّيَّتِیۡ (۱۲۴:۲) (what of my progeny? (2:124)). The Almighty's immediate reply was: لَا يَنَالُ عَهۡدِی الظّٰلِمِيۡنَ (۱۲۴:۲) (My covenant does not relate to those among your progeny who wrong their souls by breaking it, (2:124)). Obviously, just as this verdict of God relates to the Israelites, it also relates to the Ishmaelites. However, the Quraysh, by vainly regarding themselves to be the progeny of Abraham (sws) and Ishmael (sws) believed that they would not be held accountable before God; similarly, the Israelites also being inebriated with the notion of نَحۡنُ اَبۡنٰٓؤُا اللّٰهِ وَاَحِبَّآؤُهٗ (۱۸:۵) (we are the children of God and His loved ones, (5:18)) ended up in absolving themselves from being held accountable before God.

سَلۡهُمۡ اَيُّهُمۡ بِذٰلِكَ زَعِيۡمٌ ﴿۴۰﴾ اَمۡ لَهُمۡ شُرَكَآءُ ۚ فَلۡيَاۡتُوۡا بِشُرَكَآئِهِمۡ اِنۡ كَانُوۡا صٰدِقِيۡنَ ﴿۴۱﴾[36]

These questions are posed to them so that they bring forward such guarantors and associates, or even merely mention their name so that others are also able to assess their rank and status. It needs to be kept in consideration that the deities which the idolaters of Makkah were very proud of, and who they thought were very dear to God

35. Or, have you oaths with Us binding till the Day of Judgement that you will have what you yourselves ordain?

36. Ask them: "Who among them will take responsibility of this?" Do they have some associates? Let them produce these associates if what they say be true.

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and would save them from God's grasp, had been so very clearly rendered baseless and unfounded by the Qur'ān that, in response to this challenge, the Quraysh could not have dared to present their names.

يَوْمَ يُكْشَفُ عَنْ سَاقٍ وَّ يُدْعَوْنَ اِلَى السُّجُوْدِ فَلَا يَسْتَطِيْعُوْنَ ﴿۴۲﴾ خَاشِعَةً اَبْصَارُهُمْ تَرْهَقُهُمْ ذِلَّةٌ ؕ وَقَدْ كَانُوْا يُدْعَوْنَ اِلَى السُّجُوْدِ وَ هُمْ سٰلِمُوْنَ ﴿۴۳﴾[37]

The expression كشف ساق is a common Arabic idiom to express the severity of a situation. Poets of the age of *jāhiliyyah* have used it in various ways. A famous couplet of Hātim reads:

أخو الحرب ام عضت به الحرب عضها

وان شمرت عن ساقها الحرب شمرا

Akhu al-ḥarb am ʻaḍḍat bihi al-ḥarb ʻaḍḍahā
Wa in shammarat ʻan sāqihā al-ḥarb shammarā

(The praised person is a warrior. If a battle attacks him, he also fights with it, and if the situation becomes severe, he jumps into the battle without any inhibition.)[38]

The reason why this idiom expresses the severity of a situation is that whenever an upheaval takes place, chaste and decent ladies are forced to flee while raising their legwear, as a result of which, both their shins and the jewelry worn on them are exposed. A poet says:

تذهل الشيخ عن بنيه

و تبدی عن خدام العقيلة العذراء

Tudh hilu al-shaykha ʻan banihi
Wa tubdi ʻan khidām al-ʻaqilah al-ʻadhrā'

(An upheaval, which will make the aged forget their children and which will expose the shins and shin jewelry.)[39]

The implication of this verse is that whilst these people may be dreaming of having the same luxuries they have here, that Day will be very cataclysmic. Today, when they

37. They must remember the day when a great tumult will take place, and they will be called to bow in adoration and they will not be able to do so. Downcast shall be their looks; ignominy shall cover them. And they also used to be called to bow in adoration when they were normal.

38. Ḥātim Ṭā'ī, *Dīwān*, vol. 1, 24.

39. Ibn Manzur, *Lisan al-ʻarab*, vol. 12, 167.

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are called to prostrate before the Almighty, they show arrogance; however, on that Day, when they will be asked to prostrate themselves their backs will become hard and inflexible and, in spite of wanting to prostrate, they will not be able to do so. Their eyes will be downcast and ignominy will cover them. Their whole person, from head to toe, will bear witness to their helplessness and humiliation.

The directive of calling them to prostrate themselves will obviously be given to humiliate them and to show them that they had no excuse to deny the truth; in other words, their own being will bear irrefutable testimony to their arrogance and deprivation.

In Sūrah al-Ma'ārij, this topic is discussed in the following words:

يَوْمَ يَخْرُجُوْنَ مِنَ الْاَجْدَاثِ سِرَاعًا كَاَنَّهُمْ اِلٰى نُصُبٍ يُّوْفِضُوْنَ. خَاشِعَةً اَبْصَارُهُمْ تَرْهَقُهُمْ ذِلَّةٌ ؕ ذٰلِكَ الْيَوْمُ الَّذِیْ كَانُوْا يُوْعَدُوْنَ. (٧٠: ٤٣-٤٤)

The Day on which they will emerge from their graves as if racing towards targets marked. Their eyes will be downcast; ignominy will cover them. This is the Day about which they had been warned. (70:43-44)

In other words, what is said in this *sūrah* by the words يَوْمَ يُكْشَفُ عَنْ سَاقٍ is expressed in Sūrah al-Ma'ārij by the words يَوْمَ يَخْرُجُوْنَ مِنَ الْاَجْدَاثِ سِرَاعًا (the Day on which they will emerge from their graves as if racing). Thus, both language and parallels of the Qur'ān corroborate the meaning I have taken.

Some people, on the basis of a narrative, have interpreted this verse as: "the Day the Almighty will expose His shin;"[40] however, many exegetical authorities have recorded the same interpretation as I have adopted. A narrative from Ibn 'Abbās (rta), reported by 'Ikramah says that it refers to the Day of Judgement which will be a Day of harshness and brutality.[41] Ibn Jarīr Tabarī, on the authority of Ibn 'Abbās (rta), has also recorded the opinion of a poet in support of this opinion; the idiom قامت الحرب بنا على ساق is used in it.[42] Mujāhid,[43] another exegetical authority has also adopted this meaning.

فَذَرْنِیْ وَمَنْ يُّكَذِّبُ بِهٰذَا الْحَدِيْثِ ؕ سَنَسْتَدْرِجُهُمْ مِّنْ حَيْثُ لَا يَعْلَمُوْنَ ۙ﴿۴۴﴾[44]

This is a threat sounded to the rejecters of the Qur'ān mentioned in verse 15 earlier

40. Al-Tabarī, *Jāmi' al-Bayān*, vol. 29, 48.
41. Ibid., vol. 29, 47.
42. Ibid., vol. 29, 47.
43. Ibid., vol. 29, 48.
44. So, leave Me with those who are denying this discourse. We are gradually bringing them from a place they know not.

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by the words: اِذَا تُتْلٰى عَلَيْهِ اٰيٰتُنَا قَالَ اَسَاطِيْرُ الْاَوَّلِيْنَ (when Our revelations are recited to him he cries out: "these are but tales of the ancients.") This threat at the same time has a note of assurance for the Prophet (sws): he has done what was required of him, and now he should leave things to God Who is sufficient by Himself to settle their matter; He will gradually lead them to their destruction and the respite which He is now giving them is further entangling them, while they count this to be their success.

وَاُمْلِيْ لَهُمْ ؕ اِنَّ كَيْدِيْ مَتِيْنٌ ﴿۴۵﴾[45]

The Almighty is giving them time to do whatever they want to; however, this does not mean that they are beyond His control; His scheme is very sound.

اَمْ تَسْـَٔلُهُمْ اَجْرًا فَهُمْ مِّنْ مَّغْرَمٍ مُّثْقَلُوْنَ ﴿۴۶﴾[46]

This is an expression of amazement at their aversion to the Qur'ān: why is it that they don't even bother to hear what the Prophet (sws) is telling them; how will hearing him out harm them? After all, he is not demanding any payment for this service. Found in this verse is also an assurance to the Prophet (sws) in a passing manner. He should not fret over them; if they are running away from this great blessing, they are only depriving themselves; as far as the Prophet (sws) is concerned, he has succeeded before God in his mission, for he is distributing this divine treasure for free.

اَمْ عِنْدَهُمُ الْغَيْبُ فَهُمْ يَكْتُبُوْنَ ﴿۴۷﴾[47]

This is another expression of wonder on the indifference and unconcern shown to the warnings given to these people by the Prophet (sws). What is the reason for this apathy? Do they have the knowledge of the Unseen, that if the Hereafter will come, they will be blessed with high status? The implication is that, holding on to one's desires without any grounds, living in a fool's paradise and ignoring the facts of life is no wisdom; this attitude will only lead them to eternal doom.

This verse also occurs in Sūrah al-Ṭūr. I have explained it there in the light of its context. Its context in Sūrah al-Najm explains its meaning completely:

اَعِنْدَهٗ عِلْمُ الْغَيْبِ فَهُوَ يَرٰى. اَمْ لَمْ يُنَبَّاْ بِمَا فِيْ صُحُفِ مُوْسٰى. وَ اِبْرٰهِيْمَ الَّذِيْ وَفّٰٓى. اَلَّا تَزِرُ وَازِرَةٌ وِّزْرَ اُخْرٰى. (۵۳: ۳۵-۳۸)

45. And I am giving them respite. Indeed, very truly powerful is My scheme.

46. Are you demanding some payment from them, so that they are burdened with its penalty?

47. Or, is it that they have knowledge of the Unseen; thus they are writing it down?

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Has he the knowledge of the Hidden; thus he is seeing it.? Has he not heard of what is preached in the scriptures of Moses and Abraham, who fulfilled his duty: that no soul shall bear another's burden? (53:35-38)

فَاصْبِرْ لِحُكْمِ رَبِّكَ وَلَا تَكُنْ كَصَاحِبِ الْحُوْتِ ۘ اِذْ نَادٰى وَهُوَ مَكْظُوْمٌ ﴿۴۸﴾[48]

The word فَاصْبِرْ (be patient) encompasses the meaning of اِنْتَظِرْ (wait) because it is mentioned with the preposition لِ. Here, at the end of the *sūrah*, the Prohet (sws) is being assured to be steadfast and wait for the verdict of God, and be on guard that he too does not end up making a mistake like Jonah (sws), who became impatient.

The expression "companion of the fish" obviously refers to Jonah (sws). There is an element of affection in calling him with this name and it also indicates the trial he had to go through.

I have elaborated on the whole incident of Jonah (sws) in this exegesis: when his people did not value his preaching, he was so overwhelmed by their apathy that he left them without God's permission; at this, he was rebuked by the Almighty and had to undergo a trial in the belly of a fish. It is by referring to this incident that the Prophet (sws) is told that, even though his people are also not paying heed to his call, are showing their disinterest and have become adamant on denying him, he should remain steadfast and firm, and wait for the decision of his Lord. He should not make the mistake of leaving his people until the Almighty tells him to, lest he too, faces a trial similar to the one faced by Jonah (sws).

The words اِذْ نَادٰى وَهُوَ مَكْظُوْمٌ (when he called in anguish) briefly refer to the attitude adopted by Jonah (sws) right after the trial. He immediately realized his mistake, and in a state of deep anguish, he remembered God with the immortal words: لَّآ اِلٰهَ اِلَّآ اَنْتَ سُبْحٰنَكَ ۖ اِنِّيْ كُنْتُ مِنَ الظّٰلِمِيْنَ. (۸۷:۲۱)(there is no god but You; glory be to You! I have wronged my soul, (21:87)). I have already explained their eloquence while explaining the above verse. Here, it is mentioned as a guide so that no misconception should arise from the words of Jonah (sws), and that it should remain clear that though he committed a folly by being overwhelmed with a notion, he immediately repented, and the Almighty once again chose him, as is evident from the subsequent verse.

لَوْلَآ اَنْ تَدٰرَكَهٗ نِعْمَةٌ مِّنْ رَّبِّهٖ لَنُبِذَ بِالْعَرَآءِ وَهُوَ مَذْمُوْمٌ ﴿۴۹﴾ فَاجْتَبٰهُ رَبُّهٗ فَجَعَلَهٗ مِنَ الصّٰلِحِيْنَ ﴿۵۰﴾[49]

The word نِعْمَةٌ (favour) here refers to that favour of the Almighty, which was bestowed upon Jonah (sws) in the form of being once again granted prophethood after he repented and this repentance was accepted by the Almighty. The Almighty once

48. So, with patience wait for the judgement of your Lord and be not like the companion of the fish when he called His Lord in anguish.

49. Had not the favour of His Lord found him, he would have remained in the wilderness in disgrace. So, His Lord chose him and placed him among the righteous.

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again chose him as a prophet so that he could complete his holy mission. What is implied is that he did not fail in this world; he was regarded among the righteous who were the ones who succeeded.

وَاِنْ يَّكَادُ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا لَيُزْلِقُوْنَكَ بِاَبْصَارِهِمْ لَمَّا سَمِعُوا الذِّكْرَ وَيَقُوْلُوْنَ اِنَّهٗ لَمَجْنُوْنٌ ۘ﴿۵۱﴾[50]

This verse also urges the Prophet (sws) to be patient and persevering, as is already expressed in verse 48 earlier. Even though the circumstances are tough and they make such allegations, he should remain patient. Here, one should once again refresh the opening verses of the *sūrah*: مَآ اَنْتَ بِنِعْمَةِ رَبِّكَ بِمَجْنُوْنٍ. It is evident that the *sūrah* ends on the same topic as it began.

وَمَا هُوَ اِلَّا ذِكْرٌ لِّلْعٰلَمِيْنَ ﴿۵۲﴾[51]

What this verse implies is that if after hearing this, they call the Prophet (sws) a person possessed, let them do so; they should however remember that this Qur'ān is not the product of a mad person; if they do not heed this reminder, they will regret it one day, but this regret will be of no use to them at that time.

By the grace of God, I come to the end of this *sūrah's* exegesis. فَالْحَمْدُ لِلّٰهِ عَلٰى اِحْسَانِهٖ (gratitude be to God for His favour).

Raḥmānābād,
30th July, 1978 AD
23rd Sha'bān, 1398 AH

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50. And when these disbelievers hear the reminder, they look at you as if they would almost make you stumble with their eyes and say: "He is surely possessed."

51. Yet, it is only a reminder to all mankind.

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Tadabbur i Qur’ān

Sūrah al-Ḥāqqah (69)

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Sūrah al-Ḥāqqah

Central Theme and Structural Coherence

A reflection on the contents of this *sūrah* shows that it has deep resemblance with Sūrah al-Wāqi‘ah of the previous group. Thus for example:

– both substantiate the Day of Judgement and portray the horrors of that Day.

– both mention the details of the fate met by the companions of the right hand (*aṣḥāb al-yamīn*) and by the companions of the left hand (*ashāb al-shimāl*).

– In both the *sūrahs*, the veracity and genuineness of the Qur’ān is sworn by.

This *sūrah* also resembles Sūrah al-Qalam deeply, the previous *sūrah*. Its central theme is the same as that of the previous *sūrah*: substantiation of the Day of Judgement. However, the nature of arguments is different in both. Just as the greatness and veracity of the Qur’ān is explained in the previous *sūrah* and people are warned of the consequences of rejecting the Qur’ān, similarly, in this *sūrah* this subject is discussed. The difference is that in the previous *sūrah*, it is discussed in the opening part while in this *sūrah*, in the concluding part. Both these styles are important as far as instruction and sounding a reminder are concerned.

Analysis of the Discourse

Verses (1-12): The history of various nations is cited as evidence to show that the worldly punishment of rejecting their respective messenger as well as the punishment of the Hereafter is certain to come.

Verses (13-18): a portrayal of the horrors of the Day of Judgement.

Verses (19-37): details of the fate met by the companions of the right hand and by the companions of the left hand.

Verses (38-52): a mention of the exaltedness and veracity of the Qur’ān; it is not the work of a poet or a soothsayer; on the contrary, it has been brought down by a noble messenger. People who deny its warnings must fully contemplate its consequences.

Text and Translation

بِسۡمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحۡمٰنِ الرَّحِيۡمِ

اَلۡحَآقَّةُ ۙ﴿۱﴾ مَا الۡحَآقَّةُ ۚ﴿۲﴾ وَمَاۤ اَدۡرٰىكَ مَا الۡحَآقَّةُ ؕ﴿۳﴾ كَذَّبَتۡ ثَمُوۡدُ وَعَادٌۢ بِالۡقَارِعَةِ ؕ﴿۴﴾ فَاَمَّا ثَمُوۡدُ فَاُهۡلِكُوۡا بِالطَّاغِيَةِ ؕ﴿۵﴾

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وَ اَمَّا عَادٌ فَاُهْلِكُوْا بِرِيْحٍ صَرْصَرٍ عَاتِيَةٍ ۙ﴿۶﴾ سَخَّرَهَا عَلَيْهِمْ سَبْعَ لَيَالٍ وَّ ثَمٰنِيَةَ اَيَّامٍ ۙ حُسُوْمًا ۙ فَتَرَى الْقَوْمَ فِيْهَا صَرْعٰى ۙ
كَاَنَّهُمْ اَعْجَازُ نَخْلٍ خَاوِيَةٍ ۚ﴿۷﴾ فَهَلْ تَرٰى لَهُمْ مِّنْۢ بَاقِيَةٍ ﴿۸﴾ وَ جَآءَ فِرْعَوْنُ وَ مَنْ قَبْلَهٗ وَ الْمُؤْتَفِكٰتُ بِالْخَاطِئَةِ ۚ﴿۹﴾ فَعَصَوْا
رَسُوْلَ رَبِّهِمْ فَاَخَذَهُمْ اَخْذَةً رَّابِيَةً ﴿۱۰﴾ اِنَّا لَمَّا طَغَا الْمَآءُ حَمَلْنٰكُمْ فِي الْجَارِيَةِ ۙ﴿۱۱﴾ لِنَجْعَلَهَا لَكُمْ تَذْكِرَةً وَّ تَعِيَهَاۤ اُذُنٌ
وَّاعِيَةٌ ﴿۱۲﴾ فَاِذَا نُفِخَ فِي الصُّوْرِ نَفْخَةٌ وَّاحِدَةٌ ۙ﴿۱۳﴾ وَّ حُمِلَتِ الْاَرْضُ وَ الْجِبَالُ فَدُكَّتَا دَكَّةً وَّاحِدَةً ۙ﴿۱۴﴾ فَيَوْمَئِذٍ وَّقَعَتِ
الْوَاقِعَةُ ۙ﴿۱۵﴾ وَ انْشَقَّتِ السَّمَآءُ فَهِيَ يَوْمَئِذٍ وَّاهِيَةٌ ۙ﴿۱۶﴾ وَّ الْمَلَكُ عَلٰۤى اَرْجَآئِهَا ؕ وَ يَحْمِلُ عَرْشَ رَبِّكَ فَوْقَهُمْ يَوْمَئِذٍ ثَمٰنِيَةٌ ؕ﴿۱۷﴾
يَوْمَئِذٍ تُعْرَضُوْنَ لَا تَخْفٰى مِنْكُمْ خَافِيَةٌ ﴿۱۸﴾ فَاَمَّا مَنْ اُوْتِيَ كِتٰبَهٗ بِيَمِيْنِهٖ ۙ فَيَقُوْلُ هَآؤُمُ اقْرَءُوْا كِتٰبِيَهْ ۚ﴿۱۹﴾ اِنِّيْ ظَنَنْتُ
اَنِّيْ مُلٰقٍ حِسَابِيَهْ ۚ﴿۲۰﴾ فَهُوَ فِيْ عِيْشَةٍ رَّاضِيَةٍ ۙ﴿۲۱﴾ فِيْ جَنَّةٍ عَالِيَةٍ ۙ﴿۲۲﴾ قُطُوْفُهَا دَانِيَةٌ ﴿۲۳﴾ كُلُوْا وَ اشْرَبُوْا هَنِيْٓـًٔا بِمَآ
اَسْلَفْتُمْ فِي الْاَيَّامِ الْخَالِيَةِ ﴿۲۴﴾ وَ اَمَّا مَنْ اُوْتِيَ كِتٰبَهٗ بِشِمَالِهٖ ۙ فَيَقُوْلُ يٰلَيْتَنِيْ لَمْ اُوْتَ كِتٰبِيَهْ ۚ﴿۲۵﴾ وَ لَمْ اَدْرِ مَا حِسَابِيَهْ ۚ﴿۲۶﴾
يٰلَيْتَهَا كَانَتِ الْقَاضِيَةَ ۚ﴿۲۷﴾ مَاۤ اَغْنٰى عَنِّيْ مَالِيَهْ ۚ﴿۲۸﴾ هَلَكَ عَنِّيْ سُلْطٰنِيَهْ ۚ﴿۲۹﴾ خُذُوْهُ فَغُلُّوْهُ ۙ﴿۳۰﴾ ثُمَّ الْجَحِيْمَ صَلُّوْهُ ۙ﴿۳۱﴾
ثُمَّ فِيْ سِلْسِلَةٍ ذَرْعُهَا سَبْعُوْنَ ذِرَاعًا فَاسْلُكُوْهُ ﴿۳۲﴾ اِنَّهٗ كَانَ لَا يُؤْمِنُ بِاللّٰهِ الْعَظِيْمِ ۙ﴿۳۳﴾ وَ لَا يَحُضُّ عَلٰى طَعَامِ الْمِسْكِيْنِ ۚ﴿۳۴﴾
فَلَيْسَ لَهُ الْيَوْمَ هٰهُنَا حَمِيْمٌ ۙ﴿۳۵﴾ وَّ لَا طَعَامٌ اِلَّا مِنْ غِسْلِيْنٍ ۙ﴿۳۶﴾ لَّا يَاْكُلُهٗۤ اِلَّا الْخَاطِـُٔوْنَ ﴿۳۷﴾ فَلَاۤ اُقْسِمُ بِمَا تُبْصِرُوْنَ ۙ﴿۳۸﴾ وَ
مَا لَا تُبْصِرُوْنَ ۙ﴿۳۹﴾ اِنَّهٗ لَقَوْلُ رَسُوْلٍ كَرِيْمٍ ۙ﴿۴۰﴾ وَّ مَا هُوَ بِقَوْلِ شَاعِرٍ ؕ قَلِيْلًا مَّا تُؤْمِنُوْنَ ۙ﴿۴۱﴾ وَ لَا بِقَوْلِ كَاهِنٍ ؕ قَلِيْلًا مَّا
تَذَكَّرُوْنَ ؕ﴿۴۲﴾ تَنْزِيْلٌ مِّنْ رَّبِّ الْعٰلَمِيْنَ ﴿۴۳﴾ وَ لَوْ تَقَوَّلَ عَلَيْنَا بَعْضَ الْاَقَاوِيْلِ ۙ﴿۴۴﴾ لَاَخَذْنَا مِنْهُ بِالْيَمِيْنِ ۙ﴿۴۵﴾ ثُمَّ لَقَطَعْنَا
مِنْهُ الْوَتِيْنَ ۖ﴿۴۶﴾ فَمَا مِنْكُمْ مِّنْ اَحَدٍ عَنْهُ حٰجِزِيْنَ ﴿۴۷﴾ وَ اِنَّهٗ لَتَذْكِرَةٌ لِّلْمُتَّقِيْنَ ﴿۴۸﴾ وَ اِنَّا لَنَعْلَمُ اَنَّ مِنْكُمْ مُّكَذِّبِيْنَ ﴿۴۹﴾
وَ اِنَّهٗ لَحَسْرَةٌ عَلَى الْكٰفِرِيْنَ ﴿۵۰﴾ وَ اِنَّهٗ لَحَقُّ الْيَقِيْنِ ﴿۵۱﴾ فَسَبِّحْ بِاسْمِ رَبِّكَ الْعَظِيْمِ ﴿۵۲﴾

In the name of God, the Most Gracious, the Ever-Merciful.

The Inevitable! What is the Inevitable? What do you know what the Inevitable is? (1-3)

The Thamūd and the ‘Ād denied the Pounding One. So the Thamūd were destroyed by a calamity that exceeded all bounds. As for the ‘Ād, they were destroyed by an uncontrollable storm. God let it loose on them for seven nights and eight days to ravage them. You would have seen them lying overthrown as though they were hollow trunks of palm-trees. So, do you now see anyone remaining from them? (4-8)

And the same crime was committed by the Pharaoh and those before him and by the overturned settlements also. They disobeyed the messengers of their Lord. So, He seized them in His firm grip. (9-10)

And when the water exceeded the limits, it is We Who carried you upon the ark to make this incident a reminder for you and that retaining ears may hear and retain it. (11-12)

So remember when the trumpet will be sounded once only and the earth and the mountains will be shattered to pieces with one crash; so, on that day will happen

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which is to happen. And the sky will be rent asunder and frail will it be on that day. And the angels will be at its borders and eight of them will on that Day bear the throne of your Lord over them. On that Day will you be brought forth. Nothing of yours will remain a secret. (13-18)

Then, he who is given his account in his right hand will say: "Read my account. I always thought that I shall have to face my reckoning." Consequently, he will be in a life of bliss in a lofty garden whose fruits will be hanging low. Eat and drink to your heart's content as reward for what you did in the days gone by. (19-24)

And he who is given his record in his left hand will say: "Would that I were not given my record or I were not aware of my account. Would that that very death were final. Of what use has been my wealth to me? I am robbed of all my authority." – Seize him, then chain him by the neck. Then into Hell cast him. Then, with a chain whose measure in yards is seventy, bind him – For he used not to believe in God, the Most High, nor urged others to feed the poor. So, today he has neither a friend nor any food, except the fluid in which wounds are washed. Only the sinners will eat it. (25-37)

So no! I swear by that which you see and also by that which you do not that this Discourse has been brought by a noble messenger. And it is no poet's word. Little do you believe. Nor is it the word of some soothsayer. Little do you understand. It is a revelation from the Lord of the worlds. And if he had concocted some false discourses in Our name, We would have surely seized him by Our strong hand and then severed his life-vein. Then no one among you could have withheld Us from this. And surely this is a reminder for the God-fearing. And We very well know that there are those among you who deny it. And it will indeed be regretted by these disbelievers, and this surely is a certain reality. So, glorify the name of your Lord, the Most High. (38-52)

Explanation

اَلۡحَآقَّةُ ۙ﴿۱﴾ مَا الۡحَآقَّةُ ۚ﴿۲﴾ وَمَاۤ اَدۡرٰىكَ مَا الۡحَآقَّةُ ؕ﴿۳﴾[1]

The word اَلۡحَآقَّةُ refers to something which is bound to happen as per the dictates of common sense and morality; something which is inevitable and certain to materialize. This one word is actually a substitute for the whole sentence. Those who regard مَا الۡحَآقَّةُ to be its *khabar* (enunciative) have made an erroneous conclusion. The style used in these verses is adopted when it is meant to shake and jolt the addressee, especially an indifferent one. In such situations, a mention of the *mubtadā'* (inchoative) is enough. The *khabar* is not mentioned so that all the attention of the addressee is focused on the *mubtadā'*. Similarly, the ambiguity which as a result is found in the sentence also attracts the attention of the addressee.

اَلۡحَآقَّةُ (the Inevitable) is from among the names of the Day of Judgement. This name not only expresses the certainty of its happening but why it should necessarily happen

1. The Inevitable! What is the Inevitable? What do you know what the Inevitable is?

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viz a viz common sense and morality. The arguments of both these aspects can also be seen in the exegesis of the previous *sūrahs*. Some indications can also be seen in this *sūrah*, and the subsequent *surāhs* also contain some of its very significant aspects.

Though this word primarily refers to the Day of Judgement, also included in it in a secondary manner is the punishment which a nation necessarily faces if it rejects its messenger. The reason for this is that this punishment is a prelude to the punishment on the Day of Judgement and also its substantiation and, in fact, comes because of the rejection of this Day. The messengers of God have simultaneously warned their respective nations of two punishments: the punishment of the Day of Judgement and the punishment which is a necessary outcome of denying this Day. When the people of these messengers denied the Day of Judgement and regarded a messenger's standard of veracity to be the same punishment with which they were threatened if they denied this Day, then this punishment did come to them after the truth was conclusively communicated to them. Since every word and promise of God and every warning of the messenger is true, hence, this punishment also is اَلۡحَآقَّةُ ie., something which is bound to happen.

مَا الۡحَآقَّةُ is a powerful expression of the horror and dreadfulness which is further explained by the subsequent words: وَ مَآ اَدۡرٰىكَ مَا الۡحَآقَّةُ. In other words, the implied meaning is that, who can know and who can tell what this inevitable incident is and, when it comes, what will happen to those who today are obdurately denying it.

In Sūrah al-Qāri'ah also, this style of address can be witnessed. I will *inshā'Allāh* further explain it there.

كَذَّبَتۡ ثَمُوۡدُ وَعَادٌۢ بِالۡقَارِعَةِ ﴿۴﴾[2]

The inevitable incident about which people are warned of in the previous verse is substantiated by the history of the messengers and their respective nations: just as the Quraysh are refuting the punishment of denying the Hereafter and the punishment of the Hereafter itself, the Thamūd and the 'Ād too, denied both and the result of this denial came before them. In this verse, the word *qāri'ah* is used to refer to both these punishments and it means "the pounding one." In the Qur'ān, it is mentioned that one feature of these punishments is that no one knows their time of arrival. Just as a sudden knock at the door jolts every sleeping person, a similar situation will arise when these punishments arrive.

فَاَمَّا ثَمُوۡدُ فَاُهۡلِكُوۡا بِالطَّاغِيَةِ ﴿۵﴾[3]

The word الطَّاغِيَةِ refers to something which exceeds its bounds. In verse 11 of this

2. The Thamūd and the 'Ād denied the Pounding One.
3. So, the Thamūd were destroyed by a calamity that exceeded all bounds.

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sūrah, the rain water in which the people of Noah (sws) were drowned is called: طَغَا الۡمَآءُ. The Almighty punishes a people according to their attitude. When a people exceed the limits in their attitude, the Almighty induces the same elements which are serving man, to exceed limits and destroy them. The Thamūd too exceeded the limits and became rebellious, as is evident from: كَذَّبَتۡ ثَمُوۡدُ بِطَغۡوٰىهَا (۹۱:۱۱) (the Thamūd denied because of their rebellious attitude, (91:11)). The Almighty then destroyed them through a calamity.

The *sūrah* does not describe this calamity. However, I have mentioned in the exegesis of Sūrah al-Dhāriyāt the various indications made about it by the Qur'ān. It is evident from these indications that the Thamūd were destroyed by a thunderbolt which appeared from the striped winter clouds. Although there is nothing extra-ordinary about such bolts of lightning from winter clouds, however, the Almighty converts them into weapons of destruction whenever He wants to.

In these times, great advancements have been made by science and man apparently has successfully conquered many forces of nature. However, even today, we can see that whenever the Almighty wants, He brings to the fore the helplessness of all the scientists of the world.

وَاَمَّا عَادٌ فَاُهۡلِكُوۡا بِرِيۡحٍ صَرۡصَرٍ عَاتِيَةٍ ۙ﴿۶﴾[4]

The 'Ād were routed by tempestuous winter winds. Just as the calamity with which the Thamūd were destroyed is called طَاغِيَةٍ, the calamity with which the 'Ād were destroyed is called عَاتِيَةٍ which refers to an uncontrollable wind. The Almighty has put wind into the service of man, and it is necessary for his life and existence; however, when man becomes rebellious, He transforms this docile wind into an instrument of death and destruction.

سَخَّرَهَا عَلَيۡهِمۡ سَبۡعَ لَيَالٍ وَّثَمٰنِيَةَ اَيَّامٍ ۙ حُسُوۡمًا ۙ فَتَرَى الۡقَوۡمَ فِيۡهَا صَرۡعٰى ۙ كَاَنَّهُمۡ اَعۡجَازُ نَخۡلٍ خَاوِيَةٍ ۚ﴿۷﴾[5]

This is a portrayal of how winds serving man are transformed into pangs of punishment. The words حَسۡم and حُسُوۡم mean "to ravage and destroy."

The address "you would have seen" on such instances is general and does not refer to someone specific. The word الۡقَوۡمَ here refers to "opponents and adversaries." It is as if the 'Ād because of their rebelliousness became opponents of God, and thus the use of this word is very appropriate for them.

The implication of the verse is that the punishment of God knocked them to the ground as if they were hollow trunks of palm-trees, which are blown away here and

4. As for the 'Ād, they were destroyed by an uncontrollable storm.

5. God let it loose on them for seven nights and eight days to ravage them. You would have seen them lying overthrown as though they were hollow trunks of palm-trees.

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there by the wind.

The antecedent of the genitive pronoun in فِيْهَا can be the wind as well as the land in which the 'Ād lived. Both are possible and probable according to linguistic principles of Arabic.

فَهَلْ تَرٰى لَهُمْ مِّنْۢ بَاقِيَةٍ ﴿٨﴾[6]

This sentence is connected to the تَرٰى of the previous verse. In other words, the fate of the settlements of the 'Ād is brought before the imagination of the addressees and the question asked: do they see a single person alive if they look far and wide around them? The implication is that when punishment descends on a people, it totally ravages them in such a manner. Foolish are the people who are demanding to see it for it is not something to be seen – it is something to be sought refuge from.

وَجَآءَ فِرْعَوْنُ وَمَنْ قَبْلَهٗ وَالْمُؤْتَفِكٰتُ بِالْخَاطِئَةِ ﴿٩﴾[7]

The word مُؤْتَفِكَةٌ means "overturned." Here, it refers to the places inhabited by the nation of Lot (sws). They were overturned by an earthquake, and a stone blowing wind (*ḥāṣib*) had covered them with sand and pebbles. Earlier, two of the ancient nations of Arabia were mentioned. Now the Pharaoh and the settlements of the nation of Lot (sws) are referred to. The Quraysh were often able to see the remnants of these people. They too met a similar fate as the people of 'Ād and the Thamūd since both had committed the same crime.

فَعَصَوْا رَسُوْلَ رَبِّهِمْ فَاَخَذَهُمْ اَخْذَةً رَّابِيَةً ﴿١٠﴾[8]

The words فَعَصَوْا رَسُوْلَ رَبِّهِمْ portray the severity of their crime. A messenger of God is an envoy of the King of the universe. If people disobey him, it is as if they rebel against the king of the universe. As a result, they become worthy of the punishment prescribed for rebels.

The words اَخْذَةً رَّابِيَةً refer to the punishment against which one has no defence and which becomes unbearable for a person. One type of God's punishment is that which is only meant to warn and remind people. A person is soon set free from such a torment. However, when a nation dares to rebel against the Almighty, it is seized by Him in such a manner that it becomes intolerable for it.

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6. So, do you now see anyone remaining from them?

7. And the same crime was committed by the Pharaoh and those before him and by the overturned settlements also.

8. They disobeyed the Messengers of their Lord. So He seized them in His firm grip.

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اِنَّا لَمَّا طَغَا الْمَآءُ حَمَلْنٰكُمْ فِي الْجَارِيَةِ ﴿١١﴾[9]

Here, at end of the list, an account of the people of Noah (sws) is also mentioned. Historically, they were the first among those nations mentioned to have faced the wrath of God. It is as if the whole history of the messengers of God is briefly referred to.

This incident is mentioned such that it expresses the favours and blessings of God before the addressees of the *sūrah*, which are the Quraysh. They are reminded that the people whose descendents they are, were given refuge in the ark of Noah (sws) by the Almighty. They became worthy of this refuge because they had professed faith in Noah (sws) who was God's messenger. Had they not professed faith in him, they too, would have been drowned like the rest of Noah's nation. In other words, if they are the progeny of Noah (sws), then they are also the indirect recipients of this favour of God; hence they must not forget history. If they do forget it and instead of obeying the messenger of God, become disobedient to him, then there is no reason why the Almighty not deal with them in the very manner He dealt with the people of Noah (sws).

لِنَجْعَلَهَا لَكُمْ تَذْكِرَةً وَّتَعِيَهَآ اُذُنٌ وَّاعِيَةٌ ﴿١٢﴾[10]

The antecedent of the pronoun in لِنَجْعَلَهَا is not merely the ark; it is in fact the whole account of God's reward and punishment. Many examples of such antecedents can be seen in earlier *sūrahs*. The implication of the verse is that the Almighty has narrated this account of His reward and punishment before the survivors of Noah's deluge to make them remember it, learn a lesson from it and to transmit it to their later generations and not to forget it. Alas! They have forgotten it, and have risen against their messenger in the same manner in which Noah's nation had risen against theirs.

فَاِذَا نُفِخَ فِي الصُّوْرِ نَفْخَةٌ وَّاحِدَةٌ ﴿١٣﴾ وَّحُمِلَتِ الْاَرْضُ وَالْجِبَالُ فَدُكَّتَا دَكَّةً وَّاحِدَةً ﴿١٤﴾ فَيَوْمَئِذٍ وَّقَعَتِ الْوَاقِعَةُ ﴿١٥﴾[11]

After referring to various incidents in which divine punishment was meted out to a messenger's nation, here in this verse, the advent of the Day of Judgement is portrayed. It is said that just as the Almighty does not need to make elaborate arrangements to punish such nations and whenever He wants it comes in the blink of any eye, similarly, He does not have to make any preparation to bring forth the Day of Judgement. Just one blow of the trumpet would be enough to signal this great upheaval to take place.

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9. And when the water exceeded the limits, it is We Who carried you upon the ark.

10. To make this incident a reminder for you and that retaining ears may hear and retain it.

11. So, remember when the trumpet will be sounded once only and the earth and the mountains will be shattered to pieces with one crash; so on that day will happen which is to happen.

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Man should not regard this earth and its mountains to cause any bother to the Almighty to bring forth this Day. He will simultaneously pick them up with the earth in one hand and the mountains in the other, and with one collision He will shatter them to pieces. It was as if they were two glass cups which were crushed to bits. Here, one should remember a notion of the disbelievers which the Qur'ān has cited at many places: when they would make fun of the Day of Judgement, they would mockingly inquire if the Day of Judgement would also pound these mountains to pieces. Their implied meaning being that, since this was out of the question, hence such a Day would never come.

The words فَيَوْمَئِذٍ وَّقَعَتِ الْوَاقِعَةُ say that what these disbelievers are regarding as improbable will one day definitely manifest itself.

In the previous verses, the Day of Judgement has been called اَلْحَآقَّةُ (al-Hāqqah) and اَلْقَارِعَةُ (al-Qāri'ah). Here it is called اَلْوَاقِعَةُ (al-Wāqi'ah) which refers to the fact that if someone wants to consider it to be improbable it is his wish; to God it is something which is bound to happen.

وَانْشَقَّتِ السَّمَآءُ فَهِيَ يَوْمَئِذٍ وَّاهِيَةٌ ﴿١٦﴾[12]

After describing the fate that would be met by the earth and its mountains, this verse describes what will happen to the sky. Today it might look rock solid and no one can see any flaw or fissure in it; however, on that Day it will be frail and brittle, and will fly like smoke and cotton pieces.

وَّالْمَلَكُ عَلٰٓى اَرْجَآئِهَا ۭ وَيَحْمِلُ عَرْشَ رَبِّكَ فَوْقَهُمْ يَوْمَئِذٍ ثَمٰنِيَةٌ ﴿١٧﴾[13]

After alluding to the cleaving asunder of the sky, depicted in this verse is what will happen to the angels deputed on the sky. The upheaval will also strike fear in them. This actually is meant to be conveyed to the idolaters who believed that angels would help them and intercede for them on the Day of Judgement. Such will be the horrific nature of this transformation that, all other angels will retire to one side and only those will remain who will hold aloft the throne of their Lord and they will be eight in number.

The happenings and incidents mentioned by the Qur'ān which will take place on the Day of Judgement are from among the *mutashābihāt*. It is to make us broadly comprehend them that they are described in words which we are familiar with. This is the only way to describe what will happen when the world unseen and unknown to man will come. It is not possible to know what will be their true form. Consequently, the Qur'ān has directed the believers to broadly profess faith in them in the manner

12. And the sky will be rent asunder and frail will it be on that day.

13. And the angels will be at its borders and eight of them will on that Day bear the throne of your Lord over them.

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they have been mentioned, and they should not go after knowing their exact form, lest they might end up in some trial.

يَوْمَئِذٍ تُعْرَضُوْنَ لَا تَخْفٰى مِنْكُمْ خَافِيَةٌ ﴿١٨﴾[14]

Bringing forth here obviously refers to bringing forth before the Almighty. On that Day, the heavens and the earth shall be destroyed; so a person will not have any place to hide himself or any other thing.

فَاَمَّا مَنْ اُوْتِيَ كِتٰبَهٗ بِيَمِيْنِهٖ ۙ فَيَقُوْلُ هَآؤُمُ اقْرَءُوْا كِتٰبِيَهْ ﴿١٩﴾[15]

Mentioned in this verse are the details of the reward and punishment people will face once they are brought before the Almighty: The fate of believers is mentioned first. A believer will jump with joy when he sees his account and will ask others to read it.

The status of هَا is merely that of a sound similar to "ah" or "oh;" it is used when the speaker wants to say: "take hold of this." Here the word ؤُمْ has come merely fill the gap between هَا and اقْرَءُوْا. Examples of such superfluous words can be seen in previous *sūrahs*. The ہ in كِتٰبِيَهْ is for *saktah* which has come in consideration of the rhyme of the previous verses. Examples of this usage can also be seen in previous *sūrahs* and some can be seen in subsequent ones.

اِنِّيْ ظَنَنْتُ اَنِّيْ مُلٰقٍ حِسَابِيَهْ ﴿٢٠﴾[16]

Simultaneously, a believer will tell the reason for this great success: he always thought that one day he will have to give an account of his deeds. The implication being that this thought always shielded him from evil and, as a result, was able to obtain such a record of his deeds that he was able to gleefully present it to others.

The word ظَنٌّ here means "a thought or belief that is likely to come true." There exist potent signs and indications in the world around man, in that within him and in the teachings of the prophets and sages that man shall be rewarded or punished for his deeds. If a person is not absolutely dumb and indifferent, his heart bears witness that this world is not going to end just like this and that this accountability will definitely take place. Although he cannot believe in this premise the way one believes in something he observes with his eyes, yet, he does think that this belief is very likely to come true. After such a belief, he is not ready to take the risk of being indifferent to it and disregard the consequences of the fate he will meet. The faith which as a result is imbibed in a person gradually strengthens because of various life experiences until it

14. On that Day will you be brought forth. Nothing of yours will remain a secret.
15. Then he who is given his account in his right hand will say: Read my account.
16. I always thought that I shall have to face my reckoning.

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reaches the stage of certitude. If a person ignores this "likely belief" and thinks that only when he is certain of the Day of Judgement will he believe in it, then this waiting period will only end when he will see this Day from his own eyes and at that time, professing faith will be of no use to him.

فَهُوَ فِيْ عِيْشَةٍ رَّاضِيَةٍ ﴿٢١﴾ فِيْ جَنَّةٍ عَالِيَةٍ ﴿٢٢﴾ قُطُوْفُهَا دَانِيَةٌ ﴿٢٣﴾[17]

Such people will live in great ecstasy and will have whatever they want.

The contrast between عَالِيَةٍ and دَانِيَةٌ should be kept in consideration: the orchards will be on high ground yet their fruits – which is what is really required from them – will be accessible. In other orchards grown by Arabs of those times, date-palms would be grown on the edges while in the centre there would be pomegranate-trees and grape wines. They had no difficulty in understanding عَالِيَةٍ and دَانِيَةٌ. The most prominent factor that contributes to the beauty of an orchard is its height and the fact that its fruits are hanging within human reach.

كُلُوْا وَاشْرَبُوْا هَنِيْٓـًٔا بِمَآ اَسْلَفْتُمْ فِي الْاَيَّامِ الْخَالِيَةِ ﴿٢٤﴾[18]

These words will be said to them when they enter the orchards mentioned in the previous verse. Such eating and drinking will always be beneficial to them. The favours of this world can be harmful if a balance is not maintained in them or if one is not grateful enough for them; however, the favours of the next world afford no such danger. The linguistic research on the word هَنِيْٓـًٔا has already been presented in Sūrah al-Ṭūr.

The words بِمَآ اَسْلَفْتُمْ فِي الْاَيَّامِ الْخَالِيَةِ refer to the fact that the favours they have received in this world are a reward for their deeds done in the previous world. Here they are not required to do anything. They fully deserved these and this reward is everlasting. It may increase every moment but there is no fear of any reduction in it. The hard work that was needed to obtain it has already been done; now is the time to reap its benefits.

وَاَمَّا مَنْ اُوْتِيَ كِتٰبَهٗ بِشِمَالِهٖ ۙ فَيَقُوْلُ يٰلَيْتَنِيْ لَمْ اُوْتَ كِتٰبِيَهْ ﴿٢٥﴾ وَلَمْ اَدْرِ مَا حِسَابِيَهْ ﴿٢٦﴾ يٰلَيْتَهَا كَانَتِ الْقَاضِيَةَ ﴿٢٧﴾[19]

The antecedent in the pronoun in يٰلَيْتَهَا is "death." In the presence of some indication, there is nothing linguistically wrong in bringing a pronoun. Examples of such usage can be seen in the previous *sūrahs*.

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17. Consequently, he will be in a life of bliss in a lofty garden whose fruits will be hanging low.

18. Eat and drink to your heart's content as reward for what you did in the days gone by.

19. And he, who is given his record in his left hand, will say: Would that I were not given my record or I were not aware of my account. Would that very death were final!

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مَآ اَغۡنٰى عَنِّىۡ مَالِيَهۡ ۚ﴿۲۸﴾ هَلَكَ عَنِّىۡ سُلۡطٰنِيَهۡ ۚ﴿۲۹﴾[20]

The letter مَا can connote both negation and interrogation. I would prefer its latter meaning because in this case it would express yearning and longing – something which is more appropriate here.

The preposition عَنِّىۡ after هَلَكَ shows that the latter encompasses the meaning of ذَهَبَ or بَعُدَ. The word سُلۡطَانٌ means "authority." They will longingly express the loss of the authority they had in the previous world – the authority which had made them so arrogant that they became indifferent to this day.

خُذُوۡهُ فَغُلُّوۡهُ ۙ﴿۳۰﴾ ثُمَّ الۡجَحِيۡمَ صَلُّوۡهُ ۙ﴿۳۱﴾ ثُمَّ فِىۡ سِلۡسِلَةٍ ذَرۡعُهَا سَبۡعُوۡنَ ذِرَاعًا فَاسۡلُكُوۡهُ ؕ﴿۳۲﴾[21]

It is evident from certain verses of the Qur'ān that those who amassed wealth by counting and hoarding it will be tied to columns through heavy chains so that they can taste the heat of the flames which come out of the treasures they greedily guarded. More details will be mentioned *inshā'Allāh* in Sūrah al-Humazah.

اِنَّهٗ كَانَ لَا يُؤۡمِنُ بِاللّٰهِ الۡعَظِيۡمِ ۙ﴿۳۳﴾ وَلَا يَحُضُّ عَلٰى طَعَامِ الۡمِسۡكِيۡنِ ؕ﴿۳۴﴾[22]

Mentioned in this verse is the crime which made him worthy of such wrath and punishment. His attitude of worshipping wealth in the previous world and his yearning that this wealth was of no use to him in this world shows that he had no belief in God. Had he believed in Him, he would have feared standing before Him one day and giving account of the wealth he had been blessed with and that so exalted is the Almighty that no one can free anyone from His grasp.

He neither spent on the poor himself nor urged others to undertake this virtue. The stingy not only do not spend in the way of God themselves, they also want that others not spend so that the secret of their own stinginess is not disclosed.

In Sūrah al-Mā'ūn, the words used are: فَذٰلِكَ الَّذِىۡ يَدُعُّ الۡيَتِيۡمَ وَلَا يَحُضُّ عَلٰى طَعَامِ الۡمِسۡكِيۡنِ.(۱۰۷:۲-۳) (he it is who drives away the orphan, and urges not the feeding of the poor, (103:2-3)).

However, in the verse under discussion, it is said that people who, in spite of being wealthy, drive away the orphan, in fact do not believe in the Almighty even though they may vociferously make this claim. Similarly, in Sūrah al-Mā'ūn, the prayers of people who are miserly in everyday things of need are regarded as baseless: فَوَيۡلٌ لِّلۡمُصَلِّيۡنَ.الَّذِيۡنَ هُمۡ عَنۡ صَلَاتِهِمۡ سَاهُوۡنَ.الَّذِيۡنَ هُمۡ يُرَآءُوۡنَ.وَيَمۡنَعُوۡنَ الۡمَاعُوۡنَ. (۱۰۷:۴-۷) (so devastation be to these who pray,

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20. Of what use has been my wealth to me? I am robbed of all my authority.

21. – Seize him then chain him by the neck. Then into Hell cast him. Then with a chain whose measure in yards is seventy bind him.

22. For he used not to believe in God, the Most High, nor urged others to feed the poor.

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who are indifferent to the essence of their prayer; who put on a pretentious display in their prayers, and are stingy even in ordinary items of common use, (103:4-7)).

A little deliberation on both these places of the Qur'ān shows that the faith and prayers of those who in spite of having wealth do not help the orphans and the needy have no value even though they may lay claim to faith and also put up a pretentious display of praying.

فَلَيْسَ لَهُ الْيَوْمَ هٰهُنَا حَمِيْمٌ ﴿٣٥﴾[23]

Such a person will be punished in the Hereafter by being stripped of any friend. Who will sympathize with him on the Day of Judgement who did not recognize the rights of the Almighty and those of His creatures? It needs to be kept in consideration that those who are stingy in spite of being wealthy have no sympathizers in this world; so how can they have sympathizers in the world where reward and punishment is going to take place?

وَّلَا طَعَامٌ اِلَّا مِنْ غِسْلِيْنٍ ﴿٣٦﴾[24]

Since such people had selfishly spent all their wealth on their own selves and in reaping the pleasures of this world, and this greed made their wealth filthy by usurping the rights of the poor and the indigent, so, on the Day of Judgement, their food will be nothing but a fluid in which wounds are washed. It needs to be kept in mind that the wealth of a person is rendered pure if it is spent for the cause of God. If a person does not do so, then all his wealth is nothing but a pile of filth – the real form of which will manifest on the Day of Judgement in the form described in this verse.

لَّا يَاْكُلُهٗٓ اِلَّا الْخَاطِـُٔوْنَ ﴿٣٧﴾[25]

This food will only be reserved for these sinners; others will not eat it. The reason probably is the one indicated earlier: since their sin was a specific one, their punishment will also be specific. The fact that the punishment will be similar to the sin committed is something which is also indicated in earlier *sūrahs*.

فَلَآ اُقْسِمُ بِمَا تُبْصِرُوْنَ ﴿٣٨﴾ وَمَا لَا تُبْصِرُوْنَ ﴿٣٩﴾ اِنَّهٗ لَقَوْلُ رَسُوْلٍ كَرِيْمٍ ﴿٤٠﴾[26]

I have already explained that the particle لَا which is mentioned before an oath is neither redundant nor is meant to negate the oath; it comes before an oath to refute the

23. So, today he has no friend.
24. nor any food except the fluid in which wounds are washed.
25. Only the sinners will eat it.
26. So, no! I swear by that which you see and also by that which you do not that this Discourse has been brought by a noble messenger.

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premise for which the oath has been sworn. It is like saying: "No! By God this is not the truth; in fact, the truth is …" Similarly, here, the commencement of the verse by this particle shows that a notion of the addressee is so baseless that the speaker wants to refute it immediately.

I have already explained the nature of such oaths mentioned in the Qur'ān: they are meant to bear testimony to a claim. Here the real claim which is in fact the central theme of the *sūrah* is to substantiate reward and punishment. The disbelievers would deny this claim and the methodology they would adopt to refute it was that instead of answering the arguments cited by the Qur'ān in its support from the world within man and that around him, they would try to censure the Prophet (sws). They would allege that he is, God forbid, a poet or a soothsayer, and just as the jinn and the devils bring inspirations to poets and soothsayers, similarly, some jinn or soothsayer also brings inspirations to him. They would allege that it were such inspirations which the Prophet (sws) would present before people as revelations of God brought by an angel. Here, in this verse, this baseless allegation is refuted and for this, the known world and the unknown world are sworn by.

The arguments which the Qur'ān has cited to corroborate the Hereafter and the reward and punishment which is going to take place in it can be seen in the previous *sūrahs* and in this one also. A little deliberation shows that among these arguments are signs in the world within man and that around him which can be seen, and also the attributes of God and the events of the Hereafter which, though cannot be seen, can be intellectually understood. In this particular *sūrah*, reward and punishment are substantiated first by the historical account of certain ancient nations and later through the events of the unknown world, which the companions of the right hand and the companions of the left hand will face. Obviously, the first of these relates to testimonies found in history as well as in places where these people lived, and the second relates to the unknown world which though cannot be seen through the eyes but can be acknowledged through one's intellect. The reason for this is that, the attributes of God and incidents of this world which reflect how deeds of people earn a congruous fate bear witness to this. The Qur'ān by presenting both these types of oaths as evidence has told the disbelievers that the reward and punishment which it is informing them of, is bound to come. Both the known and the unknown worlds bear witness to this; they must not deny the Qur'ān by regarding it to be the creation of a poet or a soothsayer; it has not been inspired by a jinn or a devil; it has been brought down by a noble messenger.

The expression رَسُوْلٍ كَرِيْمٍ (noble messenger) refers to Gabriel. The attribute "noble" is mentioned here to refute the claim cited above of these people. It is said that the person who has brought down this discourse is not a jinn or a devil as they allege. It is brought down by a noble messenger of God. In precisely this context, the words used in Sūrah al-Takwīr which support this opinion are:

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اِنَّهٗ لَقَوۡلُ رَسُوۡلٍ كَرِيۡمٍ. ذِىۡ قُوَّةٍ عِنۡدَ ذِى الۡعَرۡشِ مَكِيۡنٍ. مُّطَاعٍ ثَمَّ اَمِيۡنٍ. (۸۱:۱۹-۲۱)

This is the word brought by a noble messenger. He is endued with great power and held in honour before the Lord of the Throne. He is obeyed and is very trustworthy. (81:19-21)

In Sūrah al-Shu'arā' also, this allegation of the disbelievers has been refuted from every aspect. It can be looked up if further details are required.

وَّمَا هُوَ بِقَوۡلِ شَاعِرٍ ؕ قَلِيۡلًا مَّا تُؤۡمِنُوۡنَ ۙ﴿۴۱﴾ وَلَا بِقَوۡلِ كَاهِنٍ ؕ قَلِيۡلًا مَّا تَذَكَّرُوۡنَ ؕ﴿۴۲﴾[27]

These verses state in a negative way what has been stated above in a positive manner. If these people had embraced faith or valued this reminder, it would have automatically become evident to them that this cannot be the discourse of a poet or a soothsayer. The problem is that, seldom does the desire to embrace faith and to listen carefully and intently arises in them. People who are devoid of this desire always look for such excuses to run away from the truth.

Why can't the Qur'ān be regarded as a discourse of a poet or a soothsayer? A detailed answer of this has been given in Sūrah al-Shu'arā', and I have explained all its aspects there. Readers are advised to look it up.

In قَلِيۡلًا مَّا تُؤۡمِنُوۡنَ and in قَلِيۡلًا مَّا تَذَكَّرُوۡنَ the verbs express intention, and it is very customary in Arabic for a verb to express intention. Examples can be seen in the previous *sūrahs*.

Mentioned in these verses is the real reason of their evasion: if they had the intention to embrace faith or the desire to benefit from the reminder, they would have easily distinguished the pebble from the pearl; unfortunately, this intention and desire seldom arises in them.

These verses also reflect their true inner-self. After all, the leaders of the Quraysh were not so dumb and foolish that they were unable to distinguish between the words of God and the words of poets and soothsayers. They definitely understood this difference, and at times the passion of acknowledging the truth would also have arisen in them; however, this passion was buried so deep by the burden of base desires that in the first place this passion would seldom arise and if ever it did, it was so weak that it would not be able to effect any change in their life. Only a very fortunate person could have been able to surmount these difficulties. It must be kept in mind here that it is the leaders of the Quraysh and not their masses which are referred to here. In the previous *sūrah* also, a graphic picture of their leadership has been drawn.

27. And it is no poet's word. Little do you believe. Nor is it the word of some soothsayer. Little do you understand.

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تَنْزِيْلٌ مِّنْ رَّبِّ الْعٰلَمِيْنَ ﴿٤٣﴾[28]

This verse expresses positively what is stated negatively in the previous verses. I have already explained in an earlier *sūrah* the true meaning of تَنْزِيْلٌ. It encompasses gradual progression and thorough arrangement in it. In particular, the thorough arrangement made by the Almighty to protect the Qur'ān from the incursions of the devils found among man and the jinn has been mentioned at many places in the Qur'ān, and I have explained it as well at these places. *Inshā'Allāh*, a further elaboration of this issue will be found in Sūrah al-Jinn.

The words مِّنْ رَّبِّ الْعٰلَمِيْنَ (from the Lord of the worlds) point to the exaltedness of the Qur'ān as well as the evil consequences of its denial. The implication is that this discourse has been revealed by the King of the heavens and the earth, and it will be a pity if they do not honour and value it. It is their own deprivation if they do so and will lead them to face severe consequences.

وَلَوْ تَقَوَّلَ عَلَيْنَا بَعْضَ الْاَقَاوِيْلِ ﴿٤٤﴾ لَاَخَذْنَا مِنْهُ بِالْيَمِيْنِ ﴿٤٥﴾ ثُمَّ لَقَطَعْنَا مِنْهُ الْوَتِيْنَ ﴿٤٦﴾ فَمَا مِنْكُمْ مِّنْ اَحَدٍ عَنْهُ حٰجِزِيْنَ ﴿٤٧﴾[29]

This is the answer to an allegation of the disbelievers. They would allege that the Prophet (sws) himself has concocted the Qur'ān, and in a vehement manner has given them the wrong impression that it is from God. The verses say that it is God who makes a person His envoy and entrusts him with divine revelations, and therefore He very vigilantly protects and guards His envoys who cannot dare make any changes in them. Even if he attributes to God the slightest of falsities, God will grasp him by His own powerful arm and will sever his life-vein and there will be no one to save him.

This is said in such a style which not only reflects the strict vigilance of the Almighty over the Prophet (sws) because of his specific status, but also is a response to a notion expressed by the disbelievers who used to say that if the Prophet (sws) wants them to accept this Qur'ān, then he should either bring some other Qur'ān or at least make some change in it which makes it acceptable to them. In Sūrah Yūnus, this demand and the response to it is mentioned thus:

وَ اِذَا تُتْلٰى عَلَيْهِمْ اٰيَاتُنَا بَيِّنٰتٍ ۙ قَالَ الَّذِيْنَ لَا يَرْجُوْنَ لِقَآءَنَا ائْتِ بِقُرْاٰنٍ غَيْرِ هٰذَآ اَوْ بَدِّلْهُ ؕ قُلْ مَا يَكُوْنُ لِيْٓ اَنْ اُبَدِّلَهٗ مِنْ تِلْقَآئِ نَفْسِيْ ۚ اِنْ اَتَّبِعُ اِلَّا مَا يُوْحٰٓى اِلَيَّ ۚ اِنِّيْٓ اَخَافُ اِنْ عَصَيْتُ رَبِّيْ عَذَابَ يَوْمٍ عَظِيْمٍ. (۱۰: ۱۵)

And when Our clear revelations are recited to them, those who entertain no hope of meeting Us say to you: "Give us a different Qur'ān, or change it." Say: "It is not

28. It is a revelation from the Lord of the worlds.

29. And if he had concocted some false discourses in Our name, We would have seized him by Our strong hand and then severed his life-vein. Then no one among you could have withheld Us from this.

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for me to change it of my own accord. I follow only what is revealed to me, for I fear, if I disobey my Lord, the punishment of a fateful day." (10:15)

The expression لَاَخَذْنَا مِنْهُ بِالْيَمِيْنِ has generally been translated as: "We would have seized him by his right hand." This does not seem to be a correct translation. I have translated it as above as per the linguistic principles of Arabic. Al-Ṭabarī's translation is also the same.

The word وَتِيْنَ means "life-vein," "king-vein" or the "heart-vein." The implication is that God is very near man and his life-vein is in His grasp; He can just squeeze this vein and kill him.

The Quraysh are addressed in فَمَا مِنْكُمْ مِّنْ اَحَدٍ عَنْهُ حٰجِزِيْنَ. If they are demanding a change in the Qur'ān to their liking, then who will be able to save the Prophet (sws) from the grasp of the Almighty. Since the word اَحَدٍ here has come in its plural usage, hence it is absolutely in accordance with the principles of Arabic for حٰجِزِيْنَ to be in the plural form. An example of this usage of اَحَدٍ can be seen in the following verse: لَسْتُنَّ كَاَحَدٍ مِّنَ النِّسَآءِ (۳۳:۳۲).

It needs to be kept in consideration that the Almighty keeps strict vigil on people whom He chooses as His messengers. This is because He entrusts them with divine revelations which need to be protected. However, this does not necessarily mean that He will break the neck of everyone who ascribes falsities to Him. There are many people who even abuse the Almighty and are still given the respite of life, let alone ascribing falsities to Him. They will face the consequences of this crime in the Hereafter. However, a true messenger of God can neither ascribe falsities to God nor can alter His message under pressure from someone. It is because the messengers are entrusted with the *sharī'ah* that they are rendered as infallible by God. A slight blemish on their part can create a wrong example for their followers and hence they are immediately corrected by the Almighty on even the slightest of blemishes. Other people are not protected by God in this manner because they are not entrusted with the responsibility with which the messengers are.

وَاِنَّهٗ لَتَذْكِرَةٌ لِّلْمُتَّقِيْنَ ﴿۴۸﴾[30]

The implication of this verse is that if some unfortunate and wretched people are not valuing the blessed Qur'ān, it is their own deprivation; the God-fearing benefit from its reminders and they are the sought after ones. The Almighty has revealed this favour specifically for them.

The verse also sounds an assurance to the Prophet (sws) that if these wretched people are not valuing the Qur'ān, he should not get depressed. After all, there are others who do value it.

30. And this is a reminder for the God-fearing.

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وَاِنَّا لَنَعْلَمُ اَنَّ مِنْكُمْ مُّكَذِّبِيْنَ ﴿٤٩﴾[31]

This is a threat and warning to the disbelievers. The Almighty very well knows their identity. What is implied is that those who are denying should remember that they are not hidden from God, and when this is so, then they will surely meet their fate.

وَاِنَّهٗ لَحَسْرَةٌ عَلَى الْكٰفِرِيْنَ ﴿٥٠﴾[32]

Today these people are denying it, and are engrossed by this feat of theirs; however, soon this will be regretted by them, and they will bemoan their misfortune. They will express remorse at their fate which was a result of this denial.

وَاِنَّهٗ لَحَقُّ الْيَقِيْنِ ﴿٥١﴾[33]

The reward and punishment which the Qur'ān is warning them of is not baseless news. It is certain to come.

One can see that the *sūrah* ends on the note with which it began. It began by saying that the Day of Judgement is inevitable. Here, at the end, this motif is reminded of in a different manner. This style of similarity between the beginning and the end is adopted in many *sūrahs* of the Qur'ān and is clear evidence of the coherence found in it.

فَسَبِّحْ بِاسْمِ رَبِّكَ الْعَظِيْمِ ﴿٥٢﴾[34]

This is an assurance sounded to the Prophet (sws) so that he should not despair because of their attitude and should patiently wait for the decision of His Lord and glorify Him. This glorification will inculcate strength, patience and confidence in him. The Almighty is powerful and exalted. When the time comes, He will show these rebellious people how each and every word of His materializes.

By the grace of God, I come to the end of this *sūrah's* exegesis. وبیدہ التوفیق (and the urge to do what is right is in His hands).

Raḥmānābād,
14th August 1978 AD
8th Ramaḍān, 1398 AH

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31. And We very well know that there are those among you who deny it.
32. And it will indeed become a regret for these disbelievers,
33. And this surely is a certain reality.
34. So glorify the name of your Lord, the Most High.

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Tadabbur i Qur’ān

Sūrah al-Ma‘ārij (70)

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Sūrah al-Ma‘ārij

Central Theme and Relationship with the Previous *Sūrah*

This *sūrah* is the counterpart of Sūrah al-Ḥāqqah, the previous *sūrah*. There is no basic difference in the central themes of the two: warning people of the Day of Judgement and the punishment that they will face on that day. The apparent style of the two *sūrahs* also has great resemblance. Just as in the previous *sūrah*, an oath is sworn in the middle of the *sūrah* to substantiate reward and punishment, in this *sūrah* too, a similar oath is sworn. A special aspect of this oath is that, in it, the arrogant and haughty people who were making fun of the punishment of Hereafter and wanted to hasten its arrival are warned. The Prophet (sws) is asked to show patience on their attitude: they are very mean and malicious. The respite given to them by God has made them very arrogant. If He even catches them slightly, they will forget their pomposity. The Prophet (sws) is asked to ignore them for a while; their judgement day is about to arrive; when it arrives, they will come to know how horrible was the thing they were hastening!

Analysis of the Discourse

Verses (1-7): People, who had been irritating the Prophet (sws) by asking him to hasten the torment and punishment he was threatening them with are reprimanded for their behaviour. They are informed that this torment shall certainly come upon the disbelievers and no one will be able to avert it. They must not measure the time-frame of God with their own. Exalted is His abode; the angels and the Archangel Gabriel need a day which is equal to fifty thousand years of this world in duration to reach His presence. The Prophet (sws) is urged to be patient and is assured that what these narrow-minded people are regarding as far-fetched is very near in the eyes of God.

Verses (8-18): A portrayal of the Day of Judgement, wherein the sky will be like molten oil and the mountains will be like carded wool. Powerful factions and groups shall no longer exist. No person will be able to inquire after another of his state and condition. On that Day, every person will like to redeem himself from punishment by offering his near ones, relatives, family and tribe as ransom, if this could deliver him. The flames of Hell shall tear and burn his skin. It shall pull into itself all those who evaded the Divine Call and spent their time in amassing riches and counting them.

Verses (19-35): A reference to the fact that people generally become frustrated and start complaining if the Almighty punishes them a little for their deeds. If they are

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given respite, they become proud, instead of being grateful and greedily guard the riches they have gathered. Only those people are an exception to this rule who are blessed with the urge to worship God. In their wealth, the deprived and the needy have a share. They fear the Day of Judgement and know that the punishment of the Almighty cannot be ignored. They are those who guard their chastity, protect their trusts and fulfill their covenants. They stand firm in their testimonies and are also vigilant in their prayers. It is these people who will be honoured in the gardens of bliss in the Hereafter.

Verses (36-44): Wonder is expressed at the attitude of the people who madly rush at the Prophet (sws) to quieten him when they hear from him about the punishment of this world and of the next. A reference is made to their false claim that they would receive more favours and blessings in the next world than they have in this – if at all the new world comes. On the basis of this claim, whenever the promised doom is mentioned to them, they get irritated. They should remember their creation and not consider their being created a second time a far-off thing; neither should they start praising themselves through their own tongues. God, the Lord of the East and the West, can more easily create them a second time. At the end, the Prophet (sws) is urged to let these people indulge in frivolous talk; not far is the promised Day when they will emerge from their graves – when their eyes will be lowered in dejection and ignominy will be covering them.

Text and Translation

بِسۡمِ اللّٰہِ الرَّحۡمٰنِ الرَّحِیۡمِ

سَاَلَ سَآئِلٌۢ بِعَذَابٍ وَّاقِعٍ ۙ﴿۱﴾ لِّلۡکٰفِرِیۡنَ لَیۡسَ لَہٗ دَافِعٌ ۙ﴿۲﴾ مِّنَ اللّٰہِ ذِی الۡمَعَارِجِ ؕ﴿۳﴾ تَعۡرُجُ الۡمَلٰٓئِکَۃُ وَ الرُّوۡحُ اِلَیۡہِ
فِیۡ یَوۡمٍ کَانَ مِقۡدَارُہٗ خَمۡسِیۡنَ اَلۡفَ سَنَۃٍ ۚ﴿۴﴾ فَاصۡبِرۡ صَبۡرًا جَمِیۡلًا ؕ﴿۵﴾ اِنَّہُمۡ یَرَوۡنَہٗ بَعِیۡدًا ۙ﴿۶﴾ وَّ نَرٰىہُ قَرِیۡبًا ؕ﴿۷﴾ یَوۡمَ
تَکُوۡنُ السَّمَآءُ کَالۡمُہۡلِ ۙ﴿۸﴾ وَ تَکُوۡنُ الۡجِبَالُ کَالۡعِہۡنِ ۙ﴿۹﴾ وَ لَا یَسۡـَٔلُ حَمِیۡمٌ حَمِیۡمًا ۚ﴿۱۰﴾ یُّبَصَّرُوۡنَہُمۡ ؕ یَوَدُّ الۡمُجۡرِمُ لَوۡ
یَفۡتَدِیۡ مِنۡ عَذَابِ یَوۡمِئِذٍۭ بِبَنِیۡہِ ۙ﴿۱۱﴾ وَ صَاحِبَتِہٖ وَ اَخِیۡہِ ۙ﴿۱۲﴾ وَ فَصِیۡلَتِہِ الَّتِیۡ تُـٔۡوِیۡہِ ۙ﴿۱۳﴾ وَ مَنۡ فِی الۡاَرۡضِ جَمِیۡعًا ۙ
ثُمَّ یُنۡجِیۡہِ ۙ﴿۱۴﴾ کَلَّا ؕ اِنَّہَا لَظٰی ۙ﴿۱۵﴾ نَزَّاعَۃً لِّلشَّوٰی ۚ﴿۱۶﴾ تَدۡعُوۡا مَنۡ اَدۡبَرَ وَ تَوَلّٰی ۙ﴿۱۷﴾ وَ جَمَعَ فَاَوۡعٰی ۙ﴿۱۸﴾ اِنَّ الۡاِنۡسَانَ
خُلِقَ ہَلُوۡعًا ۙ﴿۱۹﴾ اِذَا مَسَّہُ الشَّرُّ جَزُوۡعًا ۙ﴿۲۰﴾ وَّ اِذَا مَسَّہُ الۡخَیۡرُ مَنُوۡعًا ۙ﴿۲۱﴾ اِلَّا الۡمُصَلِّیۡنَ ۙ﴿۲۲﴾ الَّذِیۡنَ ہُمۡ عَلٰی صَلَاتِہِمۡ
دَآئِمُوۡنَ ۙ﴿۲۳﴾ وَ الَّذِیۡنَ فِیۡۤ اَمۡوَالِہِمۡ حَقٌّ مَّعۡلُوۡمٌ ۙ﴿۲۴﴾ لِّلسَّآئِلِ وَ الۡمَحۡرُوۡمِ ۙ﴿۲۵﴾ وَ الَّذِیۡنَ یُصَدِّقُوۡنَ بِیَوۡمِ الدِّیۡنِ ۙ﴿۲۶﴾ وَ
الَّذِیۡنَ ہُمۡ مِّنۡ عَذَابِ رَبِّہِمۡ مُّشۡفِقُوۡنَ ۚ﴿۲۷﴾ اِنَّ عَذَابَ رَبِّہِمۡ غَیۡرُ مَاۡمُوۡنٍ ۚ﴿۲۸﴾ وَ الَّذِیۡنَ ہُمۡ لِفُرُوۡجِہِمۡ حٰفِظُوۡنَ ۙ﴿۲۹﴾ اِلَّا
عَلٰۤی اَزۡوَاجِہِمۡ اَوۡ مَا مَلَکَتۡ اَیۡمَانُہُمۡ فَاِنَّہُمۡ غَیۡرُ مَلُوۡمِیۡنَ ۚ﴿۳۰﴾ فَمَنِ ابۡتَغٰی وَرَآءَ ذٰلِکَ فَاُولٰٓئِکَ ہُمُ الۡعٰدُوۡنَ ۚ﴿۳۱﴾ وَ الَّذِیۡنَ
ہُمۡ لِاَمٰنٰتِہِمۡ وَ عَہۡدِہِمۡ رٰعُوۡنَ ۙ﴿۳۲﴾ وَ الَّذِیۡنَ ہُمۡ بِشَہٰدٰتِہِمۡ قَآئِمُوۡنَ ۙ﴿۳۳﴾ وَ الَّذِیۡنَ ہُمۡ عَلٰی صَلَاتِہِمۡ یُحَافِظُوۡنَ ۘ﴿۳۴﴾

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أُولٰٓئِكَ فِيْ جَنّٰتٍ مُّكْرَمُوْنَ ﴿٣٥﴾ فَمَالِ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا قِبَلَكَ مُهْطِعِيْنَ ﴿٣٦﴾ عَنِ الْيَمِيْنِ وَعَنِ الشِّمَالِ عِزِيْنَ ﴿٣٧﴾ اَيَطْمَعُ
كُلُّ امْرِئٍ مِّنْهُمْ اَنْ يُّدْخَلَ جَنَّةَ نَعِيْمٍ ﴿٣٨﴾ كَلَّا ۭ اِنَّا خَلَقْنٰهُمْ مِّمَّا يَعْلَمُوْنَ ﴿٣٩﴾ فَلَآ اُقْسِمُ بِرَبِّ الْمَشٰرِقِ وَالْمَغٰرِبِ اِنَّا
لَقٰدِرُوْنَ ﴿٤٠﴾ عَلٰٓى اَنْ نُّبَدِّلَ خَيْرًا مِّنْهُمْ ۙ وَمَا نَحْنُ بِمَسْبُوْقِيْنَ ﴿٤١﴾ فَذَرْهُمْ يَخُوْضُوْا وَيَلْعَبُوْا حَتّٰى يُلٰقُوْا يَوْمَهُمُ
الَّذِيْ يُوْعَدُوْنَ ﴿٤٢﴾ يَوْمَ يَخْرُجُوْنَ مِنَ الْاَجْدَاثِ سِرَاعًا كَاَنَّهُمْ اِلٰى نُصُبٍ يُّوْفِضُوْنَ ﴿٤٣﴾ خَاشِعَةً اَبْصَارُهُمْ تَرْهَقُهُمْ ذِلَّةٌ ۭ
ذٰلِكَ الْيَوْمُ الَّذِيْ كَانُوْا يُوْعَدُوْنَ ﴿٤٤﴾

In the name of God, the Most Gracious, the Ever-Merciful.

A person in haste asked to hasten the punishment which is to befall the disbelievers. No one will be able to avert it. It will be from the Lord of many levels. The angels and the Spirit ascend towards Him in a Day the measure of which is fifty thousand years. So, show patience with grace and dignity. They regard it to be far off, and We see it very near at hand. (1-7)

The Day when the sky becomes like sediment of oil and the mountains become like tufts of carded wool, and no friend shall inquire after his friend. They shall be shown to one another. The sinner will long to redeem himself from the torment of that Day by offering his sons, his wife, his brother, his family, who remained his shelter and all the people of the earth as ransom and then save himself from it. (8-14)

By no means! It will be a fire that strips open the skin, and calls to itself every person, who turned his back and drew away and amassed riches and hoarded them. (15-18)

Man has been created impatient. Whenever some affliction befalls him, he becomes depressed and when good fortune befalls him he becomes stingy. Not so those who pray, who are always steadfast in the prayer; who set aside a fixed portion in their wealth for those who ask and for the deprived and who testify to the Day of Reckoning and dread the punishment of their Lord; indeed, the punishment of their Lord is a thing to fear. And those, who preserve their chastity except from their wives and slave-girls, for in their cases they are not blameworthy. But they who seek to go beyond this, then it is they who are transgressors. And those, who keep their trusts and promises, and those who stand firm in their testimonies and those who keep guard over their prayers. It is they, who will live in Paradise with respect. (19-35)

Then what is the matter with these disbelievers, that they rush madly at you in multitudes from right and left? Does each man among them covet to enter the garden of bliss? By no means! We have created them out of what they know. (36-39)

So No! I swear by the Lord who is the Master of all the vastness of the East and the West that We can create them in a better form and We are not powerless in this regard. So, leave them to chat and play about until they encounter that day of theirs about which they are being threatened. The Day on which they will emerge from their graves as if racing towards targets marked. Their eyes will be downcast; ignominy

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will cover them. This is the Day about which they had been warned. (40-44)

Explanation

سَاَلَ سَآئِلٌۢ بِعَذَابٍ وَّاقِعٍ ۙ[1]

I have already discussed the various connotations of the word سَاَلَ earlier in this exegesis. When it comes with the preposition ب it encompasses the meaning of "to make fun and to ask to hasten something." In other words, the verse should be translated as: a person asked to hasten or made fun of the punishment which is destined to be meted out to the disbelievers. When the arrogant leaders of the Quraysh were threatened with punishment, they would ask such questions: where is the punishment? if it is supposed to come, what is the delay? we are being threatened with it since ages; if it was sent by the Almighty, where has it stopped on the way? Obviously, such questions were not meant for investigation, but to tease and harass the Prophet (sws) and to make fun of the promised doom. They are meant to hasten the arrival of the punishment as well as to make fun of it. In fact, the very reason for hastiness is to make fun. The preposition ب has indicated both these elements in the question because it is used both with اِسْتِعْجَالٌ (to ask to hasten something) and اِسْتِهْزَاءٌ (to make fun of something). Thus, for example, it is said: يَسْتَعْجِلُوْنَكَ بِالْعَذَابِ (٢٩:٥٤). Similarly, ب is also used as a preposition for اِسْتِهْزَاءٌ.

لِّلْكٰفِرِيْنَ لَيْسَ لَهٗ دَافِعٌ ۙ[2]

The word لِّلْكٰفِرِيْنَ (for the disbelievers) can be related to وَاقِعٍ (destined to happen) of the previous verse. In this case, the meaning would be: they make fun of the punishment which is destined for the disbelievers. Similarly, this word can also be regarded to be the beginning of an independent sentence, as has been translated above; in this case, the stress would be that, it is their misfortune which is driving them to obdurately show such haste; once the great calamity comes, where will it go except to their own houses; have they prepared themselves to encounter it that they are challenging it? No one will have the courage to avert it. Neither they nor their deities; so, on what basis are they inviting it?

مِّنَ اللّٰهِ ذِى الْمَعَارِجِ ۗ[3]

The implication of this verse is that the punishment is bound to come because the threats and promises of God are certain to materialize; however, exalted is His

1. A person in haste asked to hasten the punishment which is to befall the disbelievers.
2. No one will be able to avert it.
3. It will be from the Lord of many levels.

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majesty and He is the Lord of many levels and stairways. The commands that originate from His court have their own program and time-frame. His Day is equivalent to a thousand "human" days; for this reason, man should not judge the length of God's Day on the basis of his limited measurements. It is this narrow-mindedness of man that makes him hasty and impatient about the judgements of God. He shows hastiness in every matter, and forgets that the Almighty has created separate worlds and each has separate systems and laws. Neither can we know all secrets of this universe, nor can we measure God's days by our own days and watches. In Sūrah al-Ḥajj, this subject is discussed in the following words:

وَ يَسْتَعْجِلُوْنَكَ بِالْعَذَابِ وَلَنْ يُّخْلِفَ اللّٰهُ وَعْدَهٗ ؕ وَاِنَّ يَوْمًا عِنْدَ رَبِّكَ كَاَلْفِ سَنَةٍ مِّمَّا تَعُدُّوْنَ. (٢٢:٤٧)

And they bid you hasten the scourge whereas God does not break His promise. And it should remain clear that each day of your Lord's is like a thousand years in your reckoning. (22:47)

What is implied is that man's measuring units are very small. He gauges every promise and threat on the basis of these units, and for this reason he thinks that a long period has passed over a particular promise and is yet to be fulfilled. The truth is that, as per the measures of God, only a few seconds or minutes have elapsed on the promise.

تَعْرُجُ الْمَلٰٓئِكَةُ وَالرُّوْحُ اِلَيْهِ فِيْ يَوْمٍ كَانَ مِقْدَارُهٗ خَمْسِيْنَ اَلْفَ سَنَةٍ ۚ[4]

This is an explanation of how the Almighty is regarded to be One of many levels: to reach His presence, even angels and Gabriel need a day which is equivalent to fifty thousand earth years. The word مَعَارِجْ means "stairways." In other words, what is meant is that the Almighty is beyond the beyond. Even angels and Gabriel require fifty thousand years to reach His presence, let alone other creatures.

What is said above is of the category of *mutashābihāt*. It is impossible to grasp its true form. The purpose is to inform man that he should not regard God's affairs as analogous to his own. His one day equals one thousand earth years and for certain tasks He has prescribed a day which is equivalent to fifty thousand earth years. The verse under discussion refers to this special day.

The word الرُّوْحُ refers to Gabriel. This mention of the specific after the general is to describe his majesty and grandeur because he is the Archangel. This word is used in the Qur'ān for Gabriel.

Some people have regarded this day to be the Day of Judgement, and they think that its length actually describes its horror and dreadfulness. In my opinion, this view is not

4. The angels and the Spirit ascend towards Him in a Day the measure of which is fifty thousand years.

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only against the context and occasion of the discourse, but also against linguistic principles of Arabic. Here, the occasion is to express the exaltedness of the Almighty's court and not the horrors of the Day of Judgement. The dreadfulness and horror of the Day of Judgement is expressed further in the *sūrah*.

Here, it should be kept in mind that even though the court of God is very exalted and He is beyond the beyond, yet he is nearer to man than his life-vein. He watches over everyone, hears everyone's calls and guards everyone. Though we are not able to see Him, He is able see all of us. Our eyes cannot grasp Him but He is able to see us. It is said in Sūrah al-An'ām: لَا تُدْرِكُهُ الْاَبْصَارُ وَهُوَ يُدْرِكُ الْاَبْصَارَ (١٠٣:٦) (no eyes can comprehend Him, though He comprehends all eyes. He is subtle and all-knowing, (6:103)). Therefore no one should stop fearing Him nor should anyone lose hope in Him.

Similar is the case with the angels. Though they need a day equivalent to fifty thousand earth years to reach God's presence, they still remain before His eyes. The Almighty can give His commands to them whenever He wants to, and whenever He wants, He can seize them.

فَاصْبِرْ صَبْرًا جَمِيْلًا ۝٥ اِنَّهُمْ يَرَوْنَهٗ بَعِيْدًا ۝٦ وَّ نَرٰىهُ قَرِيْبًا ۝٧[5]

This is a mention of the attitude the Prophet (sws) should adopt, in contrast to those who want to hasten the punishment of God. Showing patience with grace and dignity means that the Prophet (sws) should neither become sorrowful and lose hope because of their attitude, nor take any hasty step in response or show any compromise in his stance. In various *sūrahs*, besides the directive of exercising patience, the dignity and gracefulness of patience has also been delineated.

The verse اِنَّهُمْ يَرَوْنَهٗ بَعِيْدًا وَّ نَرٰىهُ قَرِيْبًا refers to the fact that these people are very shortsighted and for this reason they regard the threatened punishment to be far off; on the other hand, God sees it to be very near, and in reality, it is God's sight in this matter which is decisive. If they had any vision, they too, would have regarded it to be near; however, their eyes have been blindfolded and, for this reason, even a thing so near appears to them to be far off. When that day arrives, their blindfolded eyes will see the light and everyone will see that what they had regarded as far-off was actually very near. The following verse of Sūrah Qāf refers to the same aspect: فَبَصَرُكَ الْيَوْمَ حَدِيْدٌ (٢٢:٥٠) (today your sight is very sharp, (50:22)). It should be kept in mind that those whose eyes can see and whose minds are visionary as well never get trapped in this misconception. A visionary person sees with the light of God. Thus, a true believer too, like the Almighty, sees such a Day to be at hand.

5. So, show patience with grace and dignity. They regard it to be far off, and We see it very near at hand.

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يَوْمَ تَكُوْنُ السَّمَآءُ كَالْمُهْلِ ۙ﴿۸﴾ وَتَكُوْنُ الْجِبَالُ كَالْعِهْنِ ۙ﴿۹﴾[6]

This is a portrayal of the horror and of the cataclysm that will take place on the Day of Judgement. This portrayal is meant to stir and awaken people who lack the vision to grasp a reality beforehand: this description might force them to pay heed.

The word مُهْلٌ has different meanings. In Sūrah al-Kahf it has been used as well. I have explained the connotation in which it is used there. It also means the sediment of oil and the oil itself. If this meaning is adopted, then the purpose would be to liken the colour of the sky to the reddish-blackness of the sediment of oil. This reddish colour of the sky is also mentioned in Sūrah al-Rahmān: فَكَانَتْ وَرْدَةً كَالدِّهَانِ (۵۵:۳۷) (it will be red like stained leather, (55:37)).

The word عِهْن means "wool;" here it refers to carded wool as is mentioned in Sūrah Qāri'ah thus: وَتَكُوْنُ الْجِبَالُ كَالْعِهْنِ الْمَنْفُوْشِ (۱۰۱:۵) (and the mountains like tufts of carded wool, (101:5)).

This description of the events of the Day of Judgement belongs to the category of *mutashābihāt*. Their true form cannot be grasped in this world; however, it does come to mind that this redness will be caused by the inflamed fire of Hell; mountains will be reduced to pieces and appear as carded wool so that those who regard them to be eternal can observe their transient nature. Obviously, if such will be the fate of the mountains, one can imagine what will happen to other objects. This description of the Day of Judgement is recounted to warn the foolish and naïve, who are very proud of their large following and communal support and of their castles and palatial buildings. Thus, on this day, everything will be destroyed and a new world with new laws will come into being.

وَلَا يَسْـَٔلُ حَمِيْمٌ حَمِيْمًا ۚ﴿۱۰﴾[7]

Such will be the extent of selfishness on that Day that people who remained bosom friends throughout their lives, and those who sacrificed their lives and wealth for one another, will turn away from each other in such a manner that no one will even have the courtesy to inquire after the well-being of his friend.

يُّبَصَّرُوْنَهُمْ ؕ يَوَدُّ الْمُجْرِمُ لَوْ يَفْتَدِيْ مِنْ عَذَابِ يَوْمِئِذٍۭ بِبَنِيْهِ ۙ﴿۱۱﴾ وَصَاحِبَتِهٖ وَاَخِيْهِ ۙ﴿۱۲﴾ وَفَصِيْلَتِهِ الَّتِيْ تُـْٔوِيْهِ ۙ﴿۱۳﴾ وَمَنْ فِي الْاَرْضِ جَمِيْعًا ۙ ثُمَّ يُنْجِيْهِ ۙ﴿۱۴﴾[8]

6. The Day when the sky becomes like sediment of oil and the mountains become like tufts of carded wool.

7. And no friend shall inquire after his friend.

8. They shall be shown to one another. The sinner will long to redeem himself from the torment of that Day by offering his sons, his wife, his brother, his family who remained his shelter and all the people of the earth as ransom and then save himself from it.

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On that Day, people will not be out of sight of each other that emotions of communal support and sense of honour do not arise in them. They shall in fact be shown to one another and all these inflictions will befall them in front of each other. However, such will be the extent of selfishness at that time that near ones will not even inquire after one another. This subject is also discussed in verse 34 of Sūrah 'Abas. A complete elaboration *inshā'Allāh,* will be undertaken then.

So horrific will be the nature of that day's torment that as mentioned in these verses, people would like to ransom themselves through the closest of their relatives; however, this desire will never materialize. Neither will anyone have anything to give as ransom nor will the ransom be accepted; each person will have to face the punishment he had become worthy of.

A little deliberation shows that all relationships for which a person has a natural affiliation and a deep sense of honour for their support and defence are mentioned in this verse. The word family is qualified by the word تُؤْوِيهِ. In other words, he would desire to save himself, even by giving in ransom the family which remained a refuge and sanctuary for him throughout his life, which protected him from his enemies and in whose defence he himself fought like a fearless warrior.

It should remain in consideration that in tribal life, the protection and support offered by a family and tribe has great significance. A person who fearlessly fights for the defence of his family and tribe, is regarded to be a hero and he who sacrifices the interests of a tribe for the sake of his own interests or in times of danger, shows indifference to its protection and is humiliated not only before his own generation but before later ones too.

كَلَّا ۖ إِنَّهَا لَظَىٰ ﴿١٥﴾ نَزَّاعَةً لِّلشَّوَىٰ ﴿١٦﴾[9]

The implication of this verse is that, his desire to protect himself from the fire of Hell will never be fulfilled. Its flames will rip open his skin even from a distance.

The word كَلَّا (by no means) is meant to refute the desire of the sinners mentioned earlier: their desire to be shielded from fire will never materialize.

In the sentence إِنَّهَا لَظَىٰ the pronoun in إِنَّهَا refers to the punishment mentioned earlier on. The word لَظَىٰ means "flames." The word شَوَىٰ refers to the skin of the head and the sides of the body. In other words, such shall be the range of the flames of this fire that it will burn the skin of the sinners even from a great distance.

The word نَزَّاعَةً can be regarded as a second enunciative and can also be regarded as an accusative of state. In both cases, there is no significant difference in the implied meaning.

9. By no means! It will be a fire that strips open the skin

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تَدْعُوْا مَنْ اَدْبَرَ وَتَوَلّٰى ﴿١٧﴾[10]

What is implied by this verse is that when today in this world people are called to worship God and to shield themselves from His punishment and to spend in His way, they turn away and evade this call; however, on that day, it would be impossible to turn away from and evade the punishment of Hell. It will call towards itself all those who evaded and refuted. The word تَدْعُوْ is very meaningful and expressive here: those on whom the calls of the Prophet (sws) are having no effect should remember that one day these callous people will be called by Hell. It will call them in a manner that they will not be able to escape from it.

وَجَمَعَ فَاَوْعٰى ﴿١٨﴾[11]

The stingy are specifically referred to here because the call to believe in the Hereafter and to spend in the way of God would be the most burdensome for them. A requirement to succeed in the Hereafter is that, instead of amassing riches in the lockers of this world, a person should deposit his wealth in the bank of God. A stingy person would regard this to be a non-lucrative deal. He neither has faith and conviction in the Hereafter, nor has the courage to sacrifice his wealth to reap the deferred rewards of the Hereafter. It is for this very reason that the stingy have remained in the forefront in opposing the calls of the prophets of God. Stinginess and disbelief in the Hereafter are inseparable. It is mentioned in Sūrah al-Mā'ūn:

اَرَءَيْتَ الَّذِىْ يُكَذِّبُ بِالدِّيْنِ. فَذٰلِكَ الَّذِىْ يَدُعُّ الْيَتِيْمَ. وَلَا يَحُضُّ عَلٰى طَعَامِ الْمِسْكِيْنِ. (۱۰۷: ۱-۳)

Have you seen the one who belies reward and punishment?! He it is, who drives away the orphan, and urges not the feeding of the poor. (103:1-3)

The addition of the word فَاَوْعٰى to جَمَعَ is meant to convey the fact that they blindly amassed wealth by hook or by crook and then painstakingly protected it after counting it over and over again. At another place, the stingy are described thus: الَّذِىْ جَمَعَ مَالًا وَّعَدَّدَهٗ (۱۰۴: ۲) . (who greedily amassed wealth and counted it, (104:2)).

The message of the verse is that such stingy people who evaded the calls of the Prophet (sws) to spend in the way of God because they did not believe in the Hereafter, will also be beckoned by Hell to come to it.

اِنَّ الْاِنْسَانَ خُلِقَ هَلُوْعًا ﴿١٩﴾ اِذَا مَسَّهُ الشَّرُّ جَزُوْعًا ﴿٢٠﴾ وَّاِذَا مَسَّهُ الْخَيْرُ مَنُوْعًا ﴿٢١﴾[12]

10. And calls to itself every person who turned his back and drew away.
11. And amassed riches and hoarded them.
12. Man has been created impatient. Whenever some affliction befalls him, he becomes

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The word هَلُوع refers to a person who is impetuous, impatient, and mean.

Although a general word "man" is used in this verse, yet it points to the people who are under discussion: instead of valuing the respite granted to them by the Almighty, they are impatiently demanding punishment; if they are seized, they will start complaining and screaming. Instead of spending their wealth to reap great rewards in the Hereafter, they became greedy misers and regarded their riches to be a consequence of their own hard work and a result, being worthy of it. They arrogantly reckoned that, whatever they have is a clear evidence of the fact that they are favourites of God that they will continue to be its beneficiaries and if ever the Hereafter will come, they will be given even more. However, if some calamity comes their way, they will lose hope and start lamenting. The implication of the verse is that the Prophet (sws) should ignore the pompous and boastful mannerisms of such people; they are very mean and worthless.

Whenever a particular group is mentioned in a general way, the purpose is to express evasion and disgust; in fact, it is meant to disgrace them. It is as if the speaker does not consider them worthy of talking to, or even referring to. This style is also found in other languages.

The style of the verse is similar to خُلِقَ الْاِنْسَانُ مِنْ عَجَلٍ. (۲۱:۳۷) (impatience is the very substance man is made of, (21:37)) and وَ كَانَ الْاِنْسَانُ عَجُوْلًا. (۱۷:۱۱) (and man is ever impatient, (17:11)). Just as sexual leaning, anger, greed, and other similar traits exist in human nature, similarly, impatience also has its place in it. Impatience, in itself is not something condemnable. What is condemnable is its expression in an unbalanced way or at inappropriate instances. By creating man with conflicting traits and stimuli, the Almighty has desired of him to strike a balance between them, by following His directives taught to him by His prophets and to make them subservient to the will of God and to His laws. It is upon success in this trial that success in the Hereafter is based. He has been blessed with the liberty of exercising his will and authority for this purpose. Were it not for this trial, there was no sense in giving him the will to exercise his authority. There would also have been no reason to grant him superiority over other creatures of the world.

What is regarded as هلع in the verse is also a form of impatience and impetuousness. If this trait dominates his nature so much that, other traits and features of his personality become subservient to it, then it is very appropriate to say that man is created from the substance of impatience. When a dish is prepared in a manner that it has a great quantity of salt in it and this actually makes it unbearable to eat, then it would not be wrong to say that this dish has been prepared from salt only.

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depressed and when good fortune befalls him he becomes stingy.

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إِلَّا الْمُصَلِّينَ ﴿٢٢﴾ الَّذِينَ هُمْ عَلَىٰ صَلَاتِهِمْ دَائِمُونَ ﴿٢٣﴾[13]

This is a mention of people who are free of impatience and deviations and are the ones who have been mentioned earlier.

It is evident from the verse that the primary tool that can create poise and balance in the conflicting traits of human nature is the prayer. A person who wants to train and discipline himself in a manner that Satan is not able to lure him, should try foremost to be vigilant in the prayer. Without this, no person can achieve success in this objective.

As far as the question is concerned that what makes the prayer the foremost means to achieve this end, this is not the place to give a detailed answer. I have dealt with it in a separate booklet called *Ḥaqīqat-i namāz* (The Essence of the Prayer). Those who are interested should study it. Here I will mention only those aspects which the Qur'ān has alluded to at this point.

It is said that the prayers of only those people are of use who pray regularly. This is a very important admonition. The Qur'ān has also mentioned in various styles, people who in normal circumstances never pray or prostrate before the Almighty; however, when some affliction befalls them, they become very regular in their prayers and spend hours in supplicating before the Almighty. But as soon as this phase is over, they forget all their prayers and behave as if they had neither encountered the Almighty in the past nor will they ever do in the future. Since such a prayer is only a manifestation of the imbalance whose remedy is being suggested here, such a prayer is of no benefit in their training and instruction. Only that prayer is of use which is offered regularly and in all circumstances, whether good or bad. A deed which may be small in magnitude but is done regularly is more blessed than the one which may be large in magnitude, but is done erratically and irregularly. If, after a sudden burst of rain there is drought for a long period crops are destroyed due to lack of water. On the other hand, little but regular rain keeps the crops alive and results in a good harvest. Same is the case with the prayer. If a person vigilantly and diligently prays as per the general requirement of religion from him in this regard, it will earn him much more blessings than the long prayers offered so erratically that a person even forgets that he had once visited a mosque. 'Ā'ishah (rta) has compared the practices of the Prophet with steady rain;[14] whatever practice he would undertake would be undertaken regularly, even though it might be small in magnitude. It is this regularity which injects power, spirit and life in a practice.

وَالَّذِينَ فِي أَمْوَالِهِمْ حَقٌّ مَّعْلُومٌ ﴿٢٤﴾ لِّلسَّائِلِ وَالْمَحْرُومِ ﴿٢٥﴾[15]

Mentioned in this verse is the second pillar of religion: spending in the way of God.

13. Not so those who pray, who are always steadfast in the prayer.
14. Al-Bukhārī, *Al Jāmi' al-sahīh*, vol. 5, 2373, (no. 6101).
15. Who set aside a fixed portion in their wealth for those who ask and for the deprived;

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I have explained at several places in this exegesis that in the practices of religion the prayer and spending in the way of God occupy basic importance. The prayer links a person to God, while this spending links him to his fellow human beings on the right footings.

The words حَقٌّ مَّعْلُوْمٌ do not necessarily refer to *zakāh*. The system of *zakāh* with a specific percentage was implemented in Madīnah and the present *sūrah* is Makkan. These words actually mean that, these people do not spend merely to ritually and uninterestedly discharge their responsibility, but they spend a specific amount in the way of God as if this spending was mandatory upon them.

It should be kept in mind that in the age of *jāhilliyah* too, people were not unaware of *zakāh* and in spending in charity. It is evident from Sūrah al-An'ām that the idolaters would take out a share for the cause of God from their wealth; however, because of their polytheistic notions, they also gave a share to the deities whom they associated with God. The followers of the Abrahamic religion were pure monotheists and whatever they would take out from their wealth was reserved only for the cause of God. The tradition of Ishmael (sws) mentioned in the following verse was well-known among them: وَ كَانَ يَاْمُرُ اَهْلَهٗ بِالصَّلٰوةِ وَ الزَّكٰوةِ. (۱۹:۵۵) (he enjoined prayer and almsgiving on his people, (19:55)). For this reason, it is incorrect to believe that before the advent of Islam, the people of Arabia were absolutely unaware of spending a specific amount for the cause of God. The rate of *zakāh* imposed in the Madīnan period could have been different from the one which was prevalent in the age of *jāhilliyah*; however, it must be conceded that in the age of *jāhilliyah,* a specific *zakāh* rate was also prevalent. For this reason, even in the Makkan *sūrahs*, *zakāh* is mentioned many times. Like the other teachings of the religion of Abraham (sws), *zakāh* too, was concealed in the blanket of innovation; however, it existed by name. Islam revived it in its true form and imposed it in the society.

In the expression: لِّلسَّآئِلِ وَ الْمَحْرُوْمِ, the word سَائِلٌ refers to a person who begs others for his needs. This act of his shows that he is needy and thus needs help. Not much investigation is needed of such people. A person should give them whatever he can, and if he is unable to do so, then he should refuse politely. Scolding or rebuking them is not allowed. The Qur'ān and Hadīth have forbidden this attitude. An attribute of people who sincerely pray is that such needy people have a specified share in their wealth.

The word مَحْرُوْمِ obviously refers to a person who is deprived of the means and resources of life; however, since here, it is used with the word سَائِلٌ therefore one can conclude that such people, in spite of being deprived in this manner, are not willing to bear the shame of begging others. There are needy who have a deep sense of honour and who may have to skip meals because of poverty, but do not want to humiliate themselves by begging others. In particular, those who were affluent earlier and then because of the vicissitudes of life became indigent can be truly regarded as مَحْرُوْمِ. In order to help them, one needs to find them and in fact beg them to accept help, as is

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evident from certain verses of the Qur'ān. This is because the self-esteem of such people does not allow them to stoop before others.

وَالَّذِيْنَ يُصَدِّقُوْنَ بِيَوْمِ الدِّيْنِ ﴿٢٦﴾ وَالَّذِيْنَ هُمْ مِّنْ عَذَابِ رَبِّهِمْ مُّشْفِقُوْنَ ﴿٢٧﴾[16]

Mentioned in this verse is the motive of their spending in the way of God: since they believe in the Day of Judgement, the poor and the needy have a specific share in their wealth. I have already referred to above that those who do not have faith in the Hereafter find it very difficult to recognize the share of the poor and needy in their wealth. Thus it is said in Sūrah al-Mā'ūn: اَرَءَيْتَ الَّذِىْ يُكَذِّبُ بِالدِّيْنِ. فَذٰلِكَ الَّذِىْ يَدُعُّ الْيَتِيْمَ (have you seen the one who denies reward and punishment; he it is who shoves the orphan, (107:1-2)).

The words وَالَّذِيْنَ هُمْ مِّنْ عَذَابِ رَبِّهِمْ مُّشْفِقُوْنَ are actually an explanation of their testifying to the Day of Judgement: since they believe in the Day of Judgement, they have fear of their Lord's punishment. The following verses of Sūrah al-Dahr reflect their inner-self thus:

يُوْفُوْنَ بِالنَّذْرِ وَيَخَافُوْنَ يَوْمًا كَانَ شَرُّهٗ مُسْتَطِيْرًا. وَيُطْعِمُوْنَ الطَّعَامَ عَلٰى حُبِّهٖ مِسْكِيْنًا وَّ يَتِيْمًا وَّ اَسِيْرًا. اِنَّمَا نُطْعِمُكُمْ لِوَجْهِ اللّٰهِ لَا نُرِيْدُ مِنْكُمْ جَزَآءً وَّ لَا شُكُوْرًا. اِنَّا نَخَافُ مِنْ رَّبِّنَا يَوْمًا عَبُوْسًا قَمْطَرِيْرًا. (٧٦:٧-١٠)

They used to keep their vows and remained fearful of the Day whose horror will spread far and wide, and used to give food to the poor, the orphan and the captive in spite of being in need of it; [their motivation being:] "We are feeding you for God only. No reward do we desire from you nor gratitude. We dread from our Lord a Day, harsh and cruel." (76:6-10)

It is this motive of spending in the way of God which is selfless, natural, noble and free of any pomp and show. It is for this reason that the Qur'ān has highlighted it here. Other motives than this, or motives which are created artificially have a spirit of business in them; from such motives neither is the soul reformed nor is the spending done because of them acceptable to God. I have explained this point earlier, and further below I will also, *inshā'Allāh*, explain some of its important aspects.

اِنَّ عَذَابَ رَبِّهِمْ غَيْرُ مَاْمُوْنٍ ﴿٢٨﴾[17]

This is a very subtle comment on the contents of the previous verse: those who fear the punishment of the Almighty in this manner, are indeed very wise, for such is this punishment that a person should not stop dreading it even for a moment; no one knows

16. And who testify to the Day of Reckoning and who dread the punishment of their Lord.
17. Indeed, the punishment of their Lord is a thing to fear.

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when it will arrive and whenever it does, no one will be able to avert it or to divert its course, even for a small period of time. It is thus evident that the greatest thing to ward off the punishment of the Almighty is to feed and clothe the poor and needy.

وَالَّذِيْنَ هُمْ لِفُرُوْجِهِمْ حٰفِظُوْنَ ﴿٢٩﴾ اِلَّا عَلٰٓى اَزْوَاجِهِمْ اَوْ مَا مَلَكَتْ اَيْمَانُهُمْ فَاِنَّهُمْ غَيْرُ مَلُوْمِيْنَ ﴿٣٠﴾ فَمَنِ ابْتَغٰى وَرَآءَ ذٰلِكَ فَاُولٰٓئِكَ هُمُ الْعٰدُوْنَ ﴿٣١﴾[18]

After referring to the prayer, spending in charity and fear of God, these verses allude to the purity of their moral conduct: they preserve their chastity; they are not like sex-maniacs who break all limits; they confine the fulfillment of their sexual desires to their wives and slave-girls[19] and do not dare cross these bounds. Those who do, should remember that they are crossing the bounds set by God. This, in other words, means that they will have to face punishment for this attitude because the Almighty necessarily takes revenge from such people.

وَالَّذِيْنَ هُمْ لِاَمٰنٰتِهِمْ وَعَهْدِهِمْ رٰعُوْنَ ﴿٣٢﴾[20]

Keeping trusts and promises is a comprehensive act of morality and encompasses many other virtues.

The word "trusts" is not used here in a limited sense, as has been generally understood by people. All of man's abilities and capabilities and the means and resources endowed to him by the Almighty are trusts given in his custody. One day, the Almighty will inquire from him how he used or misused each and every thing entrusted to him. The Qur'ān has specified that one day he will be asked about his faculties of sight, hearing and intellect and those who would have misused them will be punished. Similarly, it is also mentioned in the Qur'ān that man will be questioned on the Day of Judgement on each and every favour he received from God.

Similarly, the word "promise" is used here in a broad sense. Included in it is the promise which comes into existence by expressing words and also the promise which is not expressed in words, but is acknowledged by the society; similarly, the promise taken by the Almighty from human nature is included here. The most important aspect of this promise is the promise and covenant which the Almighty has bound us in through his prophets and messengers; its statutes are expressly enshrined in the *sharī'ah*.

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18. And those who preserve their chastity except from their wives and slave-girls, for in their cases they are not blameworthy. But they who seek to go beyond this, then it is they who are transgressors.

19. I have already written in detail on the issue of slaves and slave women earlier on in Surah al-Nūr.

20. And those who keep their trusts and promises.

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وَالَّذِيْنَ هُمْ بِشَهٰدٰتِهِمْ قَآئِمُوْنَ ﴿٣٣﴾[21]

Just as the word "trust" and "promise" was used in a broad sense in the previous verse, similar is the case with the word "testimonies" used in this verse. Every person is responsible to bear testimony in the smallest of affairs he has taken upon himself and also responsible to bear that great testimony mentioned in the following verse of Sūrah al-Baqarah: (٢:١٤٣) وَكَذٰلِكَ جَعَلْنٰكُمْ اُمَّةً وَّسَطًا لِّتَكُوْنُوْا شُهَدَآءَ عَلَى النَّاسِ وَ يَكُوْنَ الرَّسُوْلُ عَلَيْكُمْ شَهِيْدًا (and similarly, We have made you an intermediate community so that you bear testimony to the religion of God before the people, and the *rasūl* bear such testimony before you, (2:143)).

وَالَّذِيْنَ هُمْ عَلٰى صَلَاتِهِمْ يُحَافِظُوْنَ ﴿٣٤﴾[22]

Here, at the end, the prayer is mentioned once again. This section of verses began with the mention of prayer (verse 22) and now ends on its mention as well. It is evident from this that the prayer is the fountainhead of all these virtues and also a guardian over them. It is as if the prayer is like a boundary wall which encircles and protects everything within it. He, who guards this wall, guards his religion and he, who destroys this wall will end up destroying his religion. 'Umar (rta), while referring to this paramount importance occupied by the prayer is reported to have said that he who wastes his prayer will be even more susceptible to wasting the rest of his religion.[23]

Here, it should be kept in mind that in the earlier verse, punctuality in praying is mentioned and here, in this verse, protection of the prayer is referred to. By protection here is meant protection from various afflictions and dangers which can ruin its benefits. For example, the prayer is offered, but irregularly or not at the mosque, or by indulging in such acts during it which are contrary to its objective. I have alluded in detail to these afflictions and dangers in my booklet *Ḥaqīqat-i namāz* (The Essence of the Prayer) and also in my book *Tazkiyah-i nafs* (Purification of the Soul). Those interested can look up these books.[24]

اُولٰٓئِكَ فِيْ جَنّٰتٍ مُّكْرَمُوْنَ ﴿٣٥﴾[25]

Together with glad tidings for the people who have the traits mentioned in the earlier verses, this verse is a slant on the arrogant people of the Quraysh. Inebriated with their

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21. And those, who stand firm in their testimonies.

22. And those, who keep guard over their prayers.

23. 'Abdullāh ibn Muḥammad ibn 'Ubayd ibn Abi al-Dunyā, *Al-Tahajjud wa qiyām al-layl*, 1st ed. (Riyāḍ: Maktabah al-rushd, 1998), 479.

24. This section of verses with slight variation is also found at the beginning of Sūrah al-Mu'minūn. I have dealt in detail on each and every verse there.

25. It is they who will live in Paradise with respect.

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inherited leadership, they regarded themselves to be favourites of God. They thought that if the Hereafter does come, as in this world, there too, they would be considered worthy of favours and high status, and those who are poor and underprivileged in this world would remain so in the Hereafter too. These people are informed that Paradise is not transferred on people as a legacy; its attainment relates to one's character and deeds. People who have the character which pleases God will go to Paradise, whether they are rich or poor. On the contrary, those who are bereft of this character will be kept away from Paradise, whether they belong to the leaders of Arabia or those of other countries.

فَمَالِ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا قِبَلَكَ مُهْطِعِيْنَ ﴿٣٦﴾ عَنِ الْيَمِيْنِ وَعَنِ الشِّمَالِ عِزِيْنَ ﴿٣٧﴾ اَيَطْمَعُ كُلُّ امْرِئٍ مِّنْهُمْ اَنْ يُّدْخَلَ جَنَّةَ نَعِيْمٍ ﴿٣٨﴾[26]

After hearing the verdict of the Qur'ān, the arrogant Quraysh would burn and writhe with anger. How could they hear that Muḥammad (sws) and his destitute companions would reside in Paradise and be the beneficiaries of all favours and blessings, while these leaders would become the firewood of Hell? Filled with anger, they would madly rush at the Prophet (sws) from left and right to refute and to humiliate him. The word عِزِيْنَ is the plural of عِزَةٌ and means "group" or "ally." The verb اهطاع means to "run and move forward in a brisk manner."

In these verses, wonder is expressed at the situation and at the foolishness of these people. If they arrogantly think that each one of them will be rewarded with Paradise, then this hope is never going to materialize.

This vain desire of these megalomaniacs is mentioned at several places in the Qur'ān. Thus, for example, it is said in Sūrah Hāmīm al-Sajdah:

وَقَالُوْا قُلُوْبُنَا فِيْٓ اَكِنَّةٍ مِّمَّا تَدْعُوْنَآ اِلَيْهِ وَفِيْٓ اٰذَانِنَا وَقْرٌ وَّمِنْۢ بَيْنِنَا وَبَيْنِكَ حِجَابٌ فَاعْمَلْ اِنَّنَا عٰمِلُوْنَ. (٤١: ٥)

And they say: "Our hearts are immune to the faith to which you call us. Our ears are plugged, and a thick veil stands between us. Do as you think fit, and so will we." (41:5)

In Sūrah al-Qalam, these arrogant people are refuted in the following words:

اَفَنَجْعَلُ الْمُسْلِمِيْنَ كَالْمُجْرِمِيْنَ. مَا لَكُمْ ۫ كَيْفَ تَحْكُمُوْنَ. اَمْ لَكُمْ كِتٰبٌ فِيْهِ تَدْرُسُوْنَ. (٦٨: ٣٥-٣٨)

So are We to deal with those who submit to Us as We deal with those who transgress? What is the matter with you? What is this judgement you have made?

26. Then what is the matter with these disbelievers that they rush madly at you in multitudes from right and left? Does each man among them covet to enter the garden of bliss?

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Have you a scripture in which you read that you will have there whatever you desire? (68:35-38)

كَلَّا ۖ إِنَّا خَلَقْنٰهُمْ مِّمَّا يَعْلَمُوْنَ ﴿٣٩﴾[27]

The false notion of the arrogant people among the Quraysh mentioned in the previous verse is refuted here: they should not think too much and too highly of themselves; this dream of theirs will never materialize; they very well know from what the Almighty has created them; they should not forget it. In other words, it is not befitting for a creature made from water, mud, and sperm to think of being a natural inheritor of Paradise in its conceit on its noble lineage. No one has this right merely on the basis of this. A person can have a right to Paradise only because of good deeds. If a person does not have this priceless asset with him, then, as far as his physical substance is concerned, all human beings are equal to the most impure of animals. In Sūrah al-Najm, the words are:

هُوَ اَعْلَمُ بِكُمْ اِذْ اَنْشَاَكُمْ مِّنَ الْاَرْضِ وَاِذْ اَنْتُمْ اَجِنَّةٌ فِيْ بُطُوْنِ اُمَّهٰتِكُمْ ۚ فَلَا تُزَكُّوْٓا اَنْفُسَكُمْ ۭ هُوَ اَعْلَمُ بِمَنِ اتَّقٰى.
(٣٢:٥٣)

He knew you well when He created you from earth and when you were still in your mothers' wombs. Do not pretend to purity; He knows best those who guard themselves against evil. (53:32)

I have explained in the exegesis of Sūrah al-Najm that this verse is a strong rebuttal of the concept of *waḥdat al-wujūd* of the mystics.

فَلَآ اُقْسِمُ بِرَبِّ الْمَشٰرِقِ وَالْمَغٰرِبِ اِنَّا لَقٰدِرُوْنَ ﴿٤٠﴾ عَلٰٓى اَنْ نُّبَدِّلَ خَيْرًا مِّنْهُمْ ۙ وَمَا نَحْنُ بِمَسْبُوْقِيْنَ ﴿٤١﴾[28]

The oath sworn here is similar to the one sworn in verses 38-39 of the previous *sūrah*.

I have already explained the meaning of the particle of negation at the beginning of the verse.

The words مَشْرِقِ and مَغْرِبِ occur in all three formats in the Qur'ān: singular, dual and plural, and in all the three, there is not much difference in meaning. In Arabic, the dual of a word at times refers to both edges, or boundaries of a thing, just as it has come in Sūrah al-Kahf in بَيْنَ الصَّدَفَيْنِ (٩٦:١٨). Similarly, the plural at times, comes to refer to the vastness and boundaries of a thing. I have already explained

27. So No! We have created them out of what they know.

28. Nay! I swear by the Lord who is the Master of all the vastness of the East and the West that We can create them in a better form and We are not powerless in this regard.

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this in the exegesis of Sūrah al-A'rāf.

Here the Almighty by swearing upon His own self in His capacity of being the Lord of the entire East and the West has substantiated His infinite power. Whenever He wants, He will be able to re-create mankind, even if their remains decay into the earth; nothing will cause any hindrance in this. The aspect of evidence, which is the primary objective of every oath, is very obvious in this one. In this world, we observe every day the sun, the moon and billions of stars rise and set at the behest of the Almighty. So, is the re-creation of man, once his remains decay, more difficult for the Mighty God Who is able to make them disappear every day and then reappear again? Is the first task more difficult or the second? If He was powerful enough to create the first time, why will He be powerless to create again?

In Sūrah al-Nāzi'āt, this argument is presented in a more comprehensive style thus:

ءَاَنْتُمْ اَشَدُّ خَلْقًا اَمِ السَّمَآءُ ؕ بَنٰهَا.رَفَعَ سَمْكَهَا فَسَوّٰىهَا.وَ اَغْطَشَ لَيْلَهَا وَ اَخْرَجَ ضُحٰهَا.وَ الْاَرْضَ بَعْدَ ذٰلِكَ دَحٰىهَا.اَخْرَجَ مِنْهَا مَآءَهَا وَ مَرْعٰهَا.وَالْجِبَالَ اَرْسٰىهَا. (۷۹:۲۷-۳۲)

Is it more difficult to create you or the heavens? He made it and raised high its roof; then perfected it, covered its night and uncovered its day, and after that spread out the earth, and He brought forth from it, its water and its fodder, and set firm mountains over it. (79:27-32)

The part عَلٰٓى اَنْ نُّبَدِّلَ خَيْرًا مِّنْهُمْ ۙ وَ مَا نَحْنُ بِمَسْبُوْقِيْنَ means that the Almighty is capable of replacing man with a better creature who will believe in the religion of God. Another interpretation could be that the Almighty is capable of creating man in a better form. The implication in this case would be that if the Almighty is able to create man in a better form, then it is all the easier for the Almighty to create him in his original form. People have generally interpreted the verse in the first of these meanings, and there is nothing wrong with this interpretation linguistically as well. I, however, prefer the second of these interpretations. The reason for my preference is that the real topic of this *sūrah* is that the Hereafter is a probable incident. A big reason because of which the disbelievers regarded the Hereafter to be unlikely was that they regarded re-creation of man, once his bones decayed and decomposed into the earth to be very unlikely. The subsequent verses also corroborate this view.

فَذَرْهُمْ يَخُوْضُوْا وَ يَلْعَبُوْا حَتّٰى يُلٰقُوْا يَوْمَهُمُ الَّذِيْ يُوْعَدُوْنَ ﴿۴۲﴾[29]

At the end of the *sūrah*, the Prophet (sws) is assured and the disbelievers are warned. If these people do not listen to the Prophet (sws), then he should leave them

29. So, leave them to chat and play about until they encounter that day of theirs about which they are being threatened.

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alone. They should let them indulge in their vain talk and engagements, until they are face to face with the day they are being warned of. In spite of this warning, they have no fear of it.

يَوْمَ يَخْرُجُوْنَ مِنَ الْاَجْدَاثِ سِرَاعًا كَاَنَّهُمْ اِلٰى نُصُبٍ يُّوْفِضُوْنَ ﴿۴۳﴾[30]

The word نُصُبٍ is the plural of نَصِيْبٌ and means a stone set firmly in the earth. They can refer to the stones which were set firm by the idolaters to present their vows and sacrifices, and can also refer to the stones which are set firm in the earth to act as targets in races and other similar events.

In the opinion of Ibn 'Abbās (rta), Mujāhid and al-Ḍaḥḥāk, it refers to flags which are set firm in the earth to be used as marks during races.[31]

Abū al-'Āliyah and Yahyā ibn Abī Kathīr are of the view that it refers to signs which are marked as a target for runners to race to.[32]

In my opinion also, it refers to a flag or a target. The implication of the verse is that today these arrogant people are showing their tantrums before the Prophet of God and evading his guidance and following others; however, a day is to come when the beckoner of the Day of Judgement will blow the trumpet and these people will rush towards him, as if running to their targets in a race. Thus, their arrogance will be shattered on that day and their deviant behaviour will come to an end. The way these people will run to this beckoner is portrayed at another place in the Qur'ān thus: يَوْمَئِذٍ يَّتَّبِعُوْنَ الدَّاعِيَ لَا عِوَجَ لَهٗ (۲۰:۱۰۸) (the day they will follow the call of the caller without any crookedness, (20:108)).

In other words, just as an arrow goes straight to its prescribed target, similarly, these people will run straight towards the beckoner. People have generally interpreted the word نُصُبٍ to refer to altars and temples of deities. This does not seem correct. Firstly, this is just a secondary meaning of the word and secondly, what is the purpose of running towards these objects? I also am not aware of any such tradition of the idolaters.

خَاشِعَةً اَبْصَارُهُمْ تَرْهَقُهُمْ ذِلَّةٌ ؕ ذٰلِكَ الْيَوْمُ الَّذِيْ كَانُوْا يُوْعَدُوْنَ ﴿۴۴﴾[33]

The implied meaning is that today when the messenger of God warns these people

30. The Day on which they will emerge from their graves as if racing towards targets marked.

31. Abū Ja'far Muhammad ibn Jarīr al-Tabarī, *Jāmi' al-bayān 'an tā'wīl Āy al-Qur'ān*, 1st ed., vol. 29, (Beirut Dār ihyā' al-turāth al-'arabī, 2001), 89.

32. Ibid.

33. Their eyes will be downcast; ignominy will cover them. This is the Day about which they had been warned.

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of the Day of Judgement, they rush madly at him; however, when the caller of the Day of Judgement will call them, they will rush to him with eyes downcast because of fear, and ignominy will cover their faces. It is this day that they are being warned of. Readers should refresh in their memories the question which is mentioned at the beginning of the *sūrah*: "A person in haste asked to hasten the punishment…." After the question is discussed from various aspects and the Day of Judgement is portrayed here at the very end, an answer is finally given to the question: this is the day which they had been threatened with, but they kept making fun of it. In this manner, the whole discourse is a harmonious whole.

By the grace of God, I come to the end of this *sūrah's* exegesis. فَالْحَمْدُ لِلّٰهِ عَلٰى اِحْسَانِهٖ (gratitude be to God for His favour).

Raḥmānābād,
4th September, 1978 AD
27th Ramaḍān al-Mubārak, 1398 AH

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Tadabbur i Qur’ān

Sūrah Nūḥ (71)

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Sūrah Nūḥ

Central Theme and Relationship with the Previous *Sūrah*

In Sūrah al-Ma‘ārij, the previous *sūrah*, readers have seen that the Prophet (sws) was urged to exercise patience at the attitude of those who were demanding to hasten the promised punishment. In this *sūrah*, the tale of Prophet Noah’s phases of preaching, his protracted period of waiting and exercising patience during it and finally his people facing punishment is comprehensively narrated. The purpose is to show to the Prophet (sws) and his people that in order to reach his final destination how many arduous and grueling periods of waiting and perseverance a messenger of God must pass through. Moreover, the purpose is to show his people that in spite of the hastiness of the hasty and in spite of their scorn and allegations, the Almighty does give a long respite to people; however, He finally seizes them and when He does seize them, then such is His grasp that no one can rescue those whom He grasps.

Analysis of the Discourse

The sequence of the topics covered in the *sūrah* is very evident. For this reason, no analysis is required. The various phases of the preaching mission of the Prophet Noah (sws) are mentioned in the whole *sūrah*, as referred to earlier. Some verses have come in between this discourse as on the spot insertions (*taḍmīn*). During the course of the exegesis, their nature shall, *inshā’Allāh,* be explained.

Text and Translation

بِسۡمِ اللّٰہِ الرَّحۡمٰنِ الرَّحِیۡمِ

اِنَّاۤ اَرۡسَلۡنَا نُوۡحًا اِلٰی قَوۡمِہٖۤ اَنۡ اَنۡذِرۡ قَوۡمَکَ مِنۡ قَبۡلِ اَنۡ یَّاۡتِیَہُمۡ عَذَابٌ اَلِیۡمٌ ﴿۱﴾ قَالَ یٰقَوۡمِ اِنِّیۡ لَکُمۡ نَذِیۡرٌ مُّبِیۡنٌ ﴿۲﴾ۙ اَنِ
اعۡبُدُوا اللّٰہَ وَ اتَّقُوۡہُ وَ اَطِیۡعُوۡنِ ﴿۳﴾ۙ یَغۡفِرۡ لَکُمۡ مِّنۡ ذُنُوۡبِکُمۡ وَ یُؤَخِّرۡکُمۡ اِلٰۤی اَجَلٍ مُّسَمًّی ؕ اِنَّ اَجَلَ اللّٰہِ اِذَا جَآءَ لَا یُؤَخَّرُ ۘ لَوۡ
کُنۡتُمۡ تَعۡلَمُوۡنَ ﴿۴﴾ قَالَ رَبِّ اِنِّیۡ دَعَوۡتُ قَوۡمِیۡ لَیۡلًا وَّ نَہَارًا ﴿۵﴾ۙ فَلَمۡ یَزِدۡہُمۡ دُعَآءِیۡۤ اِلَّا فِرَارًا ﴿۶﴾ وَ اِنِّیۡ کُلَّمَا دَعَوۡتُہُمۡ لِتَغۡفِرَ لَہُمۡ
جَعَلُوۡۤا اَصَابِعَہُمۡ فِیۡۤ اٰذَانِہِمۡ وَ اسۡتَغۡشَوۡا ثِیَابَہُمۡ وَ اَصَرُّوۡا وَ اسۡتَکۡبَرُوا اسۡتِکۡبَارًا ﴿۷﴾ۚ ثُمَّ اِنِّیۡ دَعَوۡتُہُمۡ جِہَارًا ﴿۸﴾ۙ ثُمَّ اِنِّیۡۤ اَعۡلَنۡتُ
لَہُمۡ وَ اَسۡرَرۡتُ لَہُمۡ اِسۡرَارًا ﴿۹﴾ۙ فَقُلۡتُ اسۡتَغۡفِرُوۡا رَبَّکُمۡ ؕ اِنَّہٗ کَانَ غَفَّارًا ﴿۱۰﴾ۙ یُّرۡسِلِ السَّمَآءَ عَلَیۡکُمۡ مِّدۡرَارًا ﴿۱۱﴾ۙ وَّ یُمۡدِدۡکُمۡ
بِاَمۡوَالٍ وَّ بَنِیۡنَ وَ یَجۡعَلۡ لَّکُمۡ جَنّٰتٍ وَّ یَجۡعَلۡ لَّکُمۡ اَنۡہٰرًا ﴿۱۲﴾ؕ مَا لَکُمۡ لَا تَرۡجُوۡنَ لِلّٰہِ وَقَارًا ﴿۱۳﴾ۚ وَ قَدۡ خَلَقَکُمۡ اَطۡوَارًا ﴿۱۴﴾ اَلَمۡ

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تَرَوْا كَيْفَ خَلَقَ اللّٰهُ سَبْعَ سَمٰوٰتٍ طِبَاقًا ﴿١٥﴾ وَّ جَعَلَ الْقَمَرَ فِيْهِنَّ نُوْرًا وَّ جَعَلَ الشَّمْسَ سِرَاجًا ﴿١٦﴾ وَ اللّٰهُ اَنْۢبَتَكُمْ مِّنَ
الْاَرْضِ نَبَاتًا ﴿١٧﴾ ثُمَّ يُعِيْدُكُمْ فِيْهَا وَ يُخْرِجُكُمْ اِخْرَاجًا ﴿١٨﴾ وَ اللّٰهُ جَعَلَ لَكُمُ الْاَرْضَ بِسَاطًا ﴿١٩﴾ لِّتَسْلُكُوْا مِنْهَا سُبُلًا
فِجَاجًا ﴿٢٠﴾ قَالَ نُوْحٌ رَّبِّ اِنَّهُمْ عَصَوْنِيْ وَ اتَّبَعُوْا مَنْ لَّمْ يَزِدْهُ مَالُهٗ وَ وَلَدُهٗۤ اِلَّا خَسَارًا ﴿٢١﴾ وَ مَكَرُوْا مَكْرًا كُبَّارًا ﴿٢٢﴾ وَ قَالُوْا لَا
تَذَرُنَّ اٰلِهَتَكُمْ وَ لَا تَذَرُنَّ وَدًّا وَّ لَا سُوَاعًا ۙ وَّ لَا يَغُوْثَ وَ يَعُوْقَ وَ نَسْرًا ﴿٢٣﴾ وَ قَدْ اَضَلُّوْا كَثِيْرًا ۚ وَ لَا تَزِدِ الظّٰلِمِيْنَ اِلَّا ضَلٰلًا ﴿٢٤﴾
مِمَّا خَطِيْٓـٰٔتِهِمْ اُغْرِقُوْا فَاُدْخِلُوْا نَارًا ۙ فَلَمْ يَجِدُوْا لَهُمْ مِّنْ دُوْنِ اللّٰهِ اَنْصَارًا ﴿٢٥﴾ وَ قَالَ نُوْحٌ رَّبِّ لَا تَذَرْ عَلَى الْاَرْضِ مِنَ
الْكٰفِرِيْنَ دَيَّارًا ﴿٢٦﴾ اِنَّكَ اِنْ تَذَرْهُمْ يُضِلُّوْا عِبَادَكَ وَ لَا يَلِدُوْۤا اِلَّا فَاجِرًا كَفَّارًا ﴿٢٧﴾ رَبِّ اغْفِرْ لِيْ وَ لِوَالِدَيَّ وَ لِمَنْ دَخَلَ بَيْتِيَ
مُؤْمِنًا وَّ لِلْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ وَ الْمُؤْمِنٰتِ ؕ وَ لَا تَزِدِ الظّٰلِمِيْنَ اِلَّا تَبَارًا ﴿٢٨﴾

In the name of God, the Most Gracious, the Ever Merciful.

We sent forth Noah as a *rasūl* to his people that: "Warn your people before there comes to them a grievous torment." He called: "O my People! I am to you a clear warner that worship God and remain within the limits set by Him and obey me. The Almighty shall forgive your [previous] sins, and shall give you respite till an appointed time. Indeed, when the time appointed by God comes, it cannot be deferred. Would that you knew!" (1-4)

Noah prayed: "O Lord! Day and night I have called my people but my calls have only added to their aversion. And whenever I called upon them to repent so that You may forgive them, they thrust their fingers in their ears, drew their cloaks over themselves, persisted in their stubbornness and showed great arrogance. Then I openly called them; then also appealed to them in public and also beseeched them in private." I said: "Seek forgiveness from your Lord; indeed, He is ever Forgiving; He shall send down on you abundant rain from the heavens and shall strengthen you with wealth and children and shall make for you gardens and shall bring forth for you springs of water." (5-12)

What has come upon you that you do not expect the majesty of your Lord to materialize, even though He made you pass through various phases of creation? Have you not seen how He has made seven heavens one above the other and made the moon a light therein and the sun a lamp, and it is He Who has grown you from the earth in such an elaborate way. Then to the earth He returns you and will bring you forth from it without any hindrance. And God has leveled out the earth for you so that you may walk in its wide tracks. (13-20)

Noah said: "O Lord! They have disobeyed me and followed those whose wealth and children only added to their ruin and they contrived great schemes and said: 'Abandon not these gods of yours whatsoever and abandon not Wadd nor Suwā'; and neither Yaghūth nor Ya'ūq nor Nasr.' And they misled many. And only increase these wrongdoers in further error." (21-24)

Because of their misdeeds they were drowned; then were cast into a great Fire. Then

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they found none to help them against God. (25)

And Noah said: "O Lord! Leave not one of these disbelievers in the land. If You spare them, they will mislead Your servants and will beget none but sinners and disbelievers. Forgive me, Lord, and forgive my parents and everyone who enters my house as a believer and forgive all believing men and believing women and increase these disbelievers only in ruin." (26-28)

Explanation

اِنَّآ اَرۡسَلۡنَا نُوۡحًا اِلٰى قَوۡمِهٖۤ اَنۡ اَنۡذِرۡ قَوۡمَكَ مِنۡ قَبۡلِ اَنۡ يَّاۡتِيَهُمۡ عَذَابٌ اَلِيۡمٌ ﴿۱﴾ [1]

This verse mentions an established practice of God which is elaborated in the Qur'ān at a number of places: when the moral misconduct of a nation reaches such an extent that it becomes worthy of God's decisive punishment, it is not punished unless a Messenger is sent by Him to deliver the truth to them in such an ultimate manner that they are left with no excuse to remain in error. According to this practice, the Almighty, before punishing the nation of Noah (sws), sent Noah (sws) as His Messenger to them. He told them that the punishment of God was at hand; if they wanted to protect themselves from it, they should mend their ways and follow the guidance brought by him; otherwise they should remember that no one will be able to escape the wrath of God.

قَالَ يٰقَوۡمِ اِنِّىۡ لَكُمۡ نَذِيۡرٌ مُّبِيۡنٌ ﴿۲﴾ [2]

The expression نَذِيۡرٌ مُّبِيۡنٌ has already been explained earlier in this exegesis.[3] Noah (sws), in compliance with the Almighty's directive, informed his people that, just as a naked warner in ancient Arabia would inform his people of an enemy attack, he too is an open warner to them and that God has sent him to warn them of the imminent punishment looming above them.

اَنِ اعۡبُدُوا اللّٰهَ وَاتَّقُوۡهُ وَاَطِيۡعُوۡنِ ﴿۳﴾ [4]

This is the detail of the warning referred to in the previous verse. The implication of the words اَنِ اعۡبُدُوا اللّٰهَ (that worship God) is that, they should stop worshipping their self-created deities (whose details are mentioned later in the *sūrah*) and worship the one and only real God. None except Him is worthy of worship.

The implication of the word وَاتَّقُوۡهُ is that they should abide by the limits prescribed

1. We sent forth Noah as a rasūl to his people that: Warn your people before there comes to them a grievous torment.
2. He called: O my People! I am to you a clear warner.
3. Amīn Aḥsan Iṣlāḥī, *Tadabbur-i Qur'ān*, . vol. 3, 386; Ibid., vol. 4, 404.
4. That worship God and remain within the limits set by Him and obey me.

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for them for their guidance by the Almighty if they have to save themselves from the wrath of God. The real meaning of *taqwā*, as has been explained at various places in this exegesis, is that one should fully respect and abide by the limits set by the Almighty through His *sharī'ah* in various spheres of human life and should fear crossing these limits. Those who break these limits without any hesitation end up facing the wrath of God.

The word وَ اَطِيْعُوْنِ refers to the fact that people should stop following their mischievous leaders and follow Noah (sws).

Further down in this *sūrah*, these mischievous leaders are mentioned. Noah (sws) had also informed his people that their leaders were escorting them to the punishment of God and if they wanted to save themselves from it, they must stop following them and adopt the guidance he has brought.

The three basic tenets of Noah's call are mentioned in this verse: *tawḥīd*, abiding by the *sharī'ah* of God and obedience to the prophet. It is these three tenets on which the call of all the prophets of God is based. The strength of religion depends on their strength. As long as a nation abides by these, it remains on the right path. As soon as it deviates from these tenets, it deviates from the right path and ultimately wanders so far away from it that no chance remains of its return. Then it rejects the advice and counsel of the best of its well-wishers and ends up facing divine punishment.

يَغْفِرْ لَكُمْ مِّنْ ذُنُوْبِكُمْ وَيُؤَخِّرْكُمْ اِلٰٓى اَجَلٍ مُّسَمًّى ۭ اِنَّ اَجَلَ اللّٰهِ اِذَا جَاۗءَ لَا يُؤَخَّرُ ۘ لَوْ كُنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُوْنَ ۝[5]

The implication of this verse is that if his people accept these three tenets of Noah's call the Almighty will forgive their crimes which made them worthy of punishment and let them live in this world till a specific period of time.

Some people regard the مِنْ in يَغْفِرْ لَكُمْ مِّنْ ذُنُوْبِكُمْ to be superfluous (*zā'idah*) and some others regard it to be equivalent in meaning to عَنْ. Both these opinions are against linguistic principles of Arabic. No word in the Qur'ān is superfluous. If, at some places, a word does seem to be redundant at those places too, it comes to fill a vacuum which in itself is a common linguistic principle. Such letters are also specific. Not every letter can be regarded to serve this function without any proof. There is no example in the Qur'ān or in classical Arabic of the letter مِنْ used in the superfluous sense.

Similarly, regarding it to be equivalent in meaning to عَنْ also has no proof. In the first place, there is no reliable example of it being used in this meaning. Even if there is, the verb غَفَرَ is never used with the preposition عَنْ. One invokes the Almighty with the words: رَبَّنَا اغْفِرْ لَنَا ذُنُوْبَنَا and not by saying رَبَّنَا اغْفِرْ لَنَا عَنْ ذُنُوْبِنَا. In such a case, one will

5. The Almighty shall forgive your [previous] sins, and shall give you respite till an appointed time. Indeed, when the time appointed by God comes it cannot be deferred. Would that you knew!"

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have to interpret the words by regarding the verb غَفَرَ to encompass (*mutaḍammin*) the verb صَفَحَ in it or to encompass some other verb which is used with the preposition عَنْ. Without this consideration, using غَفَرَ with عَنْ would be against linguistic principles of Arabic.

In my opinion, the verb is in its conventional connotation of *tab'īḍ* (partialness). The whole discourse would be something to the effect: يَغْفِرْ لَكُم مَا تَقَدَّمَ مِن ذُنُوبِكُم ([if you accept these tenets of my call], the Almighty will forgive all your past sins). Here because of contextual indication these implied words are suppressed. Thus it is known and is also very logical that once a person enters in the state of belief from disbelief his sins committed in the state of disbelief are forgiven. As far as those sins are concerned which a person commits once he becomes a believer, they are forgiven on the basis of a specific principle stated in the following verse of Sūrah al-Nisā':

اِنَّمَا التَّوْبَةُ عَلَى اللّٰهِ لِلَّذِيْنَ يَعْمَلُوْنَ السُّوْٓءَ بِجَهَالَةٍ ثُمَّ يَتُوْبُوْنَ مِنْ قَرِيْبٍ فَاُولٰٓئِكَ يَتُوْبُ اللّٰهُ عَلَيْهِمْ ۗ وَكَانَ اللّٰهُ عَلِيْمًا حَكِيْمًا. (٤:١٧-١٨)

It is incumbent upon God to forgive those who commit a sin while being overwhelmed with emotions and then quickly repent. It is they who are forgiven by God. God is all-knowing and wise. (4:17-18)

I have already explained this principle while writing the exegesis of the above-quoted verse.

In the verse under discussion, the word مِنْ is thus used to express the fact that if the people of Noah (sws) accept his call and embrace faith, the Almighty shall forgive all their sins committed in the state of disbelief. If the word مِنْ was not present in this verse, then the verse could also have meant that all their past and future sins will be forgiven. This of course is not true, because embracing faith after disbelief erases only the pervious sins and not the future ones.

The expression وَيُؤَخِّرْكُمْ اِلٰٓى اَجَلٍ مُّسَمًّى refers to the fact that if his people accept all the three tenets presented by Noah (sws) the punishment of the Almighty from which Noah (sws) is threatening them with will be deferred by the Almighty and they will be granted a specific period of time to live in this world.

The condition اَجَلٍ مُّسَمًّى (specific time period) shows that no time granted in this world is unlimited. Everything of this world is transient and temporary. Even if a person spends his life as a practicing believer, he is not granted an infinite life span; one day, he has to die. The only difference is that he is not destroyed by some punishment of the Almighty; he is granted respite to live his full life. Similarly, if a nation embraces faith, fears the limits set by the Almighty and remains obedient to his prophet, the Almighty allows it to flourish as long as it adheres to faith and remains fearful of God. As soon as it deviates from this path, it begins to plunge from the

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height it had attained and when its moral decadence reaches its lowest limit its span of life reaches its end, and it is destroyed in its capacity of a nation. Similar is the case of this whole world as well. Its life span is also fixed. A day will come when this place of test will be disbanded and a new world – called the Hereafter – with new laws and regulations will come into being.

Noah (sws) has pointed to this temporary nature of the life of this world and that of its components. Both the pious and the impious should always keep this in mind. Only those who keep this in mind will benefit from the time granted in this life and those who are indifferent to this will face great loss, because of what they did in this world.

The secret of real success in life depends on understanding what is said above. However, as the expression لَوْ كُنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُوْنَ (would that you knew!) says, very few people understand this secret. Thus, Noah (sws) has expressed this yearning.

The established practice of God referred to in this verse has also been mentioned in the following verses:

وَ لَوْ يُؤَاخِذُ اللّٰهُ النَّاسَ بِظُلْمِهِمْ مَّا تَرَكَ عَلَيْهَا مِنْ دَآبَّةٍ وَّ لٰكِنْ يُّؤَخِّرُهُمْ اِلٰٓى اَجَلٍ مُّسَمًّى ۚ فَاِذَا جَآءَ اَجَلُهُمْ لَا يَسْتَاْخِرُوْنَ سَاعَةً وَّ لَا يَسْتَقْدِمُوْنَ. (١٦:٦١)

If God punished men for their sins, not one creature would be left alive. He reprieves them till a time ordained; when their time arrives, not for one moment shall they stay behind nor can they go before it. (16:61)

قَالَ رَبِّ اِنِّيْ دَعَوْتُ قَوْمِيْ لَيْلًا وَّ نَهَارًا ۙ﴿٥﴾ فَلَمْ يَزِدْهُمْ دُعَآءِيْٓ اِلَّا فِرَارًا ﴿٦﴾[6]

From here begins the second phase of Noah's preaching mission. It is in this phase that he beseeched the Almighty that, all his preaching efforts which he expended day and night for his people have borne no fruit. It needs to be kept in mind that the extent of time Noah (sws) spent in his preaching mission is unrivalled. The Qur'ān says:

وَ لَقَدْ اَرْسَلْنَا نُوْحًا اِلٰى قَوْمِهٖ فَلَبِثَ فِيْهِمْ اَلْفَ سَنَةٍ اِلَّا خَمْسِيْنَ عَامًا ؕ فَاَخَذَهُمُ الطُّوْفَانُ وَ هُمْ ظٰلِمُوْنَ. (٢٩:١٤)

And We sent forth Noah to his people, and he dwelt among them for a thousand years less fifty. Then in their sinfulness the Flood overwhelmed them. (29:14)

Obviously, the words دَعَوْتُ قَوْمِيْ لَيْلًا وَّ نَهَارًا (day and night I have called my people) cannot have a trace of exaggeration in them. A *rasūl* decides the fate of his nation in this world. Their life or death depends upon accepting or rejecting him. For this

6. Noah prayed: O Lord! Day and night I have called my people but my calls have only added to their aversion.

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reason, though every *rasūl* called his people to the right path day and night and expended every drop of his energy for this purpose, but, as pointed out earlier, the lengthy span of time Noah (sws) spent in trying to stir and awaken people from their slumber stands unmatched. However, in spite of this extended effort, the result, in his own words, was: فَلَمْ يَزِدْهُمْ دُعَاۗءِيْٓ اِلَّا فِرَارًا (but my calls have only added to their aversion). This aversion obviously was not because the message preached by Noah (sws) was against the dictates of human intellect and reason or that his people doubted his sincerity or uprightness. The propriety of his message with sense and reason was evident to everyone and everyone also acknowledged the veracity in his heart. However, since this message was against their base desires and its acceptance would also have bitten the arrogance of their leaders, the more Noah (sws) went after them, the more they ran away from him. They felt that they had no answer to the message preached by Noah (sws) and it was also difficult for them to change their lifestyle. Therefore, they preferred this escapist policy so that they could protect their criminal conscience from the pangs of compunction. This was indeed an improper scheme adopted by them; but then, what better scheme can be adopted by those who want to run away from the truth?

وَاِنِّيْ كُلَّمَا دَعَوْتُهُمْ لِتَغْفِرَ لَهُمْ جَعَلُوْٓا اَصَابِعَهُمْ فِيْٓ اٰذَانِهِمْ وَاسْتَغْشَوْا ثِيَابَهُمْ وَاَصَرُّوْا وَاسْتَكْبَرُوا اسْتِكْبَارًا ۝[7]

This verse portrays the evasion and arrogance of Noah's people.

Because of eloquence, a part of the discourse is suppressed in دَعَوْتُهُمْ لِتَغْفِرَ لَهُمْ. If this suppression is unveiled, the whole discourse would be something like this: "Whenever I called upon them to seek forgiveness so that they could become worthy of Your forgiveness, they thrust their fingers in their ears." However, instead of saying these words, Noah (sws) uttered a sentence in which the consequence of an action (forgiveness) was placed in place of the action (seeking forgiveness) so that the wretchedness and misfortune of his people becomes fully evident. In other words, the implication of the verse is that Noah (sws) tried his best that his people should become worthy of God's forgiveness, but so worthless were they that they did not care to even listen to him.

The words وَاسْتَغْشَوْا ثِيَابَهُمْ depict the arrogance and haughtiness of the leaders of the nation: as soon as they heard Noah's call, they flung their shawls over themselves with great distaste and walked off from that place.

In the expression وَاَصَرُّوْا وَاسْتَكْبَرُوا اسْتِكْبَارًا, a verbal noun is suppressed after the verb أَصَرُّوا ie. وَأَصَرُّوا إِصْرَاراً.This is because of the existence of a verbal noun in its parallel construction. Noah (sws), in other words, is lamenting that, instead of accepting his

7. And whenever I called upon them to repent so that You may forgive them, they thrust their fingers in their ears, drew their cloaks over them, persisted in their stubbornness and showed great arrogance.

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calls of seeking forgiveness from the Almighty, his people have become adamant on their polytheism and disobedience. Verse 20 further explains this.

The word اسْتِكْبَارًا means to deliberately oppose the truth and to display rebelliousness before it. Whether small or big, truths are dear to God. For this reason, it is essential that a person submits to them even though they might be hard on him. If a person rejects the truth, then he is the follower of the practice instituted by Satan, and will end up as his accomplice.

The word اسْتِكْبَارًا is mentioned as the real reason for their attitude. In other words, it was because of اسْتِكْبَارًا that they thrust their fingers in their ears, drew their cloaks over themselves and became adamant on their polytheism.

ثُمَّ اِنِّيْ دَعَوْتُهُمْ جِهَارًا ۝ ثُمَّ اِنِّيْٓ اَعْلَنْتُ لَهُمْ وَاَسْرَرْتُ لَهُمْ اِسْرَارًا ۝[8]

In these very eloquent words, Noah (sws) has alluded to the third phase of his preaching mission. When he saw that his people had thrust their fingers in their ears and had drawn their cloaks over them, he augmented his preaching efforts. A look at the preaching missions of the prophets of God shows that this has remained a common feature of their mission. The more their people became averse to them, the more they enhanced their efforts; their pitch amplified and they became even more fervent in rousing and stirring their people. This is the nature of the truth and its upholders. The severity of opposition highlights the majesty of the truth and instead of discouraging its advocates, fuels them.

The implication of verse ثُمَّ اِنِّيْٓ اَعْلَنْتُ لَهُمْ وَاَسْرَرْتُ لَهُمْ اِسْرَارًا is that, where it was needed that the message be presented in the open in a forceful manner, Noah (sws) did so without any hesitation so that even the deaf were able to hear his call; similarly, when he would see that there was an opportunity to present his message in an intimate way, he went ahead with this too. The objective was to stir those who still had some ability left in them to accept the truth so that if they want to contemplate their fate before the decisive moment arrives they have the chance. In other words, Noah (sws) tried to approach his people in all these ways and through every opportunity he had so that not the slightest chance remained of not discharging his responsibility of preaching.

A verbal noun is suppressed after اَعْلَنْتُ لَهُمْ just as it is after the verb اَصَرُّوْا.[9]

فَقُلْتُ اسْتَغْفِرُوْا رَبَّكُمْ ۭ اِنَّهٗ كَانَ غَفَّارًا ۝ يُّرْسِلِ السَّمَاۗءَ عَلَيْكُمْ مِّدْرَارًا ۝[10]

In these verses, Noah (sws) has explained the message he emotively and lovingly

8. Then, I openly called them; then also appealed to them in public and also beseeched them in private.

9. The verbal noun suppressed obviously is: اِعْلَانًا. (*Translator*)

10. I said: Seek forgiveness from your Lord; indeed, He is ever Forgiving; He shall send down on you abundant rain from the heavens.

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preached his people.

Concealed in the words اِنَّهٗ كَانَ غَفَّارًا is also the fact that in order to earn forgiveness from Him, merely turning to Him is enough; the intercession of their alleged deities is not at all required. He is extremely forgiving. Without an intercession from anyone, He turns in mercy to all those who sincerely seek repentance from Him.

It may be noted that the polytheists of every period have remained in the misconception that since so exalted is the Almighty and as a result, so beyond is He from their reach that unless there are some interceders it is not possible to make Him accept a prayer or a wish. The following verse of Sūrah al-Zumar reflects this very notion of theirs: مَا نَعۡبُدُهُمۡ اِلَّا لِيُقَرِّبُوۡنَاۤ اِلَى اللّٰهِ زُلۡفٰى (٣٩:٣) (We serve them only that they may bring us nearer to God, (39:3)). The Qur'ān has refuted this false notion of theirs from various angles. In the verse under discussion, the part اِنَّهٗ كَانَ غَفَّارًا also refutes this notion. In other words, when He Himself is the most forgiving of all, how can anyone be more forgiving than Him?

The word السَّمَآءَ in the verse يُّرۡسِلِ السَّمَآءَ عَلَيۡكُمۡ مِّدۡرَارًا refers to clouds, as has been explained earlier in this exegesis. The word مِدۡرَارًا means clouds which produce a lot of rain. It is used equally in the masculine and feminine gender. The implication is that their repentance will stir the mercy of the Almighty and He will bless them with a lot of wealth and offspring and abundant resources of life.

The polytheists were under the false notion that it was their deities who would send down rain and it was as a result of their favour that they were blessed with children. For this reason, they were very afraid to hear or say even a single word against them. It is alluded to by the Qur'ān at several places that one reason because of which they had opposed their messengers was that these messengers degraded their deities; they thought that as a result of this degrading attitude, these deities would be displeased and would deprive human beings of all their blessings and favours. So much so, in the times of a messenger of God, if they faced trials and tribulations they would attribute it to the misfortune brought, God forbid, by the messenger and his followers. They would reckon that they had displeased their deities because of which they were facing some trial. Noah (sws) has rebutted this false notion of theirs. He has informed them that it is not their deities who are in charge of giving people wealth and children or causing rain so that if these people forsake these deities they will deprive them of such favours. All these favours are in the hands of God and His mercy is elicited through repentance. So, if they repent, they will see how He blesses them with abundant rain. In verse 52 of Sūrah Hūd, this topic has also been discussed. Those interested may look it up.

Here, an important point regarding the philosophy of religion is worth noting. It is actually attributed to 'Umar (rta). It is mentioned in various narratives that once while

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praying the *istisqā'* prayer,[11] he only sought repentance from the Almighty, and never mentioned rain in his supplication. When people asked him the reason for this lack of mention, he replied in the light of these very verses of Sūrah Nūḥ that the key to the mercy of God is repentance, and this is what he had done while leading Muslims in this prayer.[12] In other words, he meant that seeking forgiveness from God will invoke His mercy and He knows their needs better than they themselves.

وَّيُمْدِدْكُمْ بِاَمْوَالٍ وَّبَنِيْنَ وَيَجْعَلْ لَّكُمْ جَنّٰتٍ وَّيَجْعَلْ لَّكُمْ اَنْهٰرًا ﴿١٢﴾[13]

This is just a further elaboration of what is discussed in the previous verses: it is only God Who grants wealth, children, orchards and canals. If they please Him by repenting before Him, they will receive all these things. None of these things is granted to them by their deities. So, they need not be apprehensive of the displeasure of these deities that they might snatch these favours from them.

Connoisseurs of the Arabic language know that the repetition of the verb يَجْعَل in the above verse has emphasized the great value and attraction of these favours .

مَا لَكُمْ لَا تَرْجُوْنَ لِلّٰهِ وَقَارًا ﴿١٣﴾[14]

These words of Noah (sws) express amazement at the foolishness of his people. Noah says that why is it that they are evading his calls, when he is so fondly calling them to seek forgiveness; do they think that they will remain engrossed in their evil practices and the anger of God – who gave them all these favours – will not manifest on them? The implication is that if this is their conception of God, it means that they have no idea of His majesty and anger. God forbid, they regard Him to be absolutely insensitive and devoid of any sense of honour. They think that whatever highhandedness they may exhibit in this world, they will not be taken notice of by God's majesty and honour. Sūrah al-Infitār discusses this subject in the following words:

يٰٓاَيُّهَا الْاِنْسَانُ مَا غَرَّكَ بِرَبِّكَ الْكَرِيْمِ (٦:٨٢) (O man! What evil has enticed you from your gracious Lord, (82:6)). The message of this verse is that when man receives abundant favours from God and also observes that he can do whatever he wants to and still God does not seize him, he gradually becomes stubborn and indifferent to his accountability before God. In reality, had he deeply reflected on all this, he could have easily understood that the Almighty has not been so munificent to him so that he

11. This prayer is offered to beseech the Almighty to send down rain.

12. See, for example: 'Abd al-Razzāq ibn Ḥammām al-Ṣan'ānī, *Al-Muṣannaf*, 2nd ed., vol. 3 (Beirut: Al-Maktab al-islāmī, 1403 AH.), 87, (no. 4902).

13. And shall strengthen you with wealth and children and shall make for you gardens and shall bring forth for you springs of water.

14. What has come upon you that you do not expect the majesty of your Lord to materialize.

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spread such mischief in the land. On the other hand, it is a requisite of these favours that he remain grateful to God and also realize that one day he will be held accountable for these favours and on that day no one will be able to save himself from His gasp.

The word تَرْجُوْنَ here means "to expect and to hope" and the word وَقَارًا means "glory, grandeur and fury." Besides the attributes of grandeur, the Almighty also has attributes of fury which manifest themselves on people who disobey and reject His Messengers. In order to remain on the right path, it is essential that a person keep alive in himself a comprehension of both these type of attributes. An imbalance in these two types will result in an imbalance in the overall attributes of God. As a result, he loses balance in every sphere of life. Since in this *sūrah,* the addressees are the arrogant, only attributes of wrath are referred to.

وَ قَدْ خَلَقَكُمْ اَطْوَارًا ﴿۱۴﴾[15]

Expressed in this verse is the argument on the basis of which no one should regard the day on which the Almighty's mercy will manifest itself to be improbable or impossible. The implication of the verse is that, if a person reflects merely on all the phases of his creation, he can easily understand that the Almighty Who has shown such creativity can have no difficulty in re-creating man after he dies and becomes dust; when this happens, people will see from their own eyes how His wrath will manifest itself and punish these criminals and these arrogant people. This argument with precisely the same context has been expressed at various other places in the Qur'ān in order to substantiate the Day of Judgement. In Sūrah al-Ḥajj, the words are:

يٰٓاَيُّهَا النَّاسُ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ فِيْ رَيْبٍ مِّنَ الْبَعْثِ فَاِنَّا خَلَقْنٰكُمْ مِّنْ تُرَابٍ ثُمَّ مِنْ نُّطْفَةٍ ثُمَّ مِنْ عَلَقَةٍ ثُمَّ مِنْ مُّضْغَةٍ مُّخَلَّقَةٍ وَّ غَيْرِ مُخَلَّقَةٍ لِّنُبَيِّنَ لَكُمْ ؕ وَ نُقِرُّ فِي الْاَرْحَامِ مَا نَشَآءُ اِلٰٓى اَجَلٍ مُّسَمًّى ثُمَّ نُخْرِجُكُمْ طِفْلًا ثُمَّ لِتَبْلُغُوْٓا اَشُدَّكُمْ ۚ وَ مِنْكُمْ مَّنْ يُّتَوَفّٰى وَ مِنْكُمْ مَّنْ يُّرَدُّ اِلٰٓى اَرْذَلِ الْعُمُرِ لِكَيْلَا يَعْلَمَ مِنْۢ بَعْدِ عِلْمٍ شَيْـًٔا ؕ وَ تَرَى الْاَرْضَ هَامِدَةً فَاِذَآ اَنْزَلْنَا عَلَيْهَا الْمَآءَ اهْتَزَّتْ وَ رَبَتْ وَ اَنْۢبَتَتْ مِنْ كُلِّ زَوْجٍۭ بَهِيْجٍ. ذٰلِكَ بِاَنَّ اللّٰهَ هُوَ الْحَقُّ وَ اَنَّهٗ يُحْيِ الْمَوْتٰى وَ اَنَّهٗ عَلٰى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيْرٌ. (۲۲: ۵-۶)

People! If you doubt being recreated after death, then reflect that We first created you from dust, then from a living germ, then from a clot of blood, and then from a lump of flesh – some complete and some incomplete – We have shown you these majesties to manifest to you Our power. And We cause to remain in the womb whatever We please for an appointed term. Then We bring you forth as infants and give you time that you may reach your prime. Some die young, and some live on

15.Even though He made you pass through various phases of creation.

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to abject old age when all that they once knew they know no more. And you see the earth dry and barren: but no sooner do We send the water down upon it than it begins to stir and swell putting forth various kinds of growth. That is because God is the real Lord: He brings to life the dead and has power over all things. (22:5-6)

This subject has also been discussed in verses 14-16 of Sūrah al-Mu'minūn. Those who want to know the details, can look it up.

اَلَمۡ تَرَوۡا كَيۡفَ خَلَقَ اللّٰهُ سَبۡعَ سَمٰوٰتٍ طِبَاقًا ﴿١٥﴾ وَّ جَعَلَ الۡقَمَرَ فِيۡهِنَّ نُوۡرًا وَّ جَعَلَ الشَّمۡسَ سِرَاجًا ﴿١٦﴾ وَ اللّٰهُ اَنۡۢبَتَكُمۡ مِّنَ الۡاَرۡضِ نَبَاتًا ﴿١٧﴾ ثُمَّ يُعِيۡدُكُمۡ فِيۡهَا وَ يُخۡرِجُكُمۡ اِخۡرَاجًا ﴿١٨﴾ وَ اللّٰهُ جَعَلَ لَكُمُ الۡاَرۡضَ بِسَاطًا ﴿١٩﴾ لِّتَسۡلُكُوۡا مِنۡهَا سُبُلًا فِجَاجًا ﴿٢٠﴾[16]

These six verses can be regarded as part of Noah's speech; however, it seems to me that these are insertions from the Almighty in order to complete Noah's speech. Several examples of such insertions can be seen in previous *sūrahs*. A strong indication that these verses are insertions is that the remaining portion of Noah's speech which occurs in verse 21 begins with the words: قَالَ نُوۡحٌ رَّبِّ (Noah said: O Lord! …). If verses 15-20 were also part of Noah's speech, then there was no need to repeat the words قَالَ نُوۡحٌ رَّبِّ. This repetition indicates that the above verses are insertions from the Almighty. In order to connect the subsequent part with the prayer of Noah (sws), it was indicated that it was part of his speech.

In the verse: اَلَمۡ تَرَوۡا كَيۡفَ خَلَقَ اللّٰهُ سَبۡعَ سَمٰوٰتٍ طِبَاقًا the Almighty has directed man's attention to the most prominent sign of His universe: the seven heavens. The implication is that how can the Almighty Who has the power to create seven heavens one above the other be unable to create man again? Precisely this same argument is found in the following verse of Sūrah al-Nāzi'āt: ءَاَنۡتُمۡ اَشَدُّ خَلۡقًا اَمِ السَّمَآءُ ؕ بَنٰٮهَا (٧٩:٢٧) (is it more difficult to create you or the sky? He made it, (79:27)). In a slightly different style, this argument can also be seen in verses 40-41 of Sūrah al-Ma'ārij..

The word طِبَاقٌ means "multi-layered; one above the other." This does not necessarily mean that, like the folds of a cloth, the sky has seven consecutive folds; the purpose is to say that there are seven distinct worlds raised high and each has seven heavens. Such facts mentioned in the Qur'ān are meant to present a picture of God's infinite power. It is enough to believe in them in the broad sense. The reality will manifest on the Day the Almighty will unveil it. No one except God can unveil it.

16. Have you not seen how He has made seven heavens one above the other, and made the moon a light therein and the sun a lamp, and it is He Who has grown you from the earth in such an elaborate way. Then, to the earth He returns you and will bring you forth from it without any hindrance. And God has leveled out the earth for you so that you may walk in its wide tracks.

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Science has very limited access and however much it has been able to unfold, has only increased man's bewilderment instead of having knowledge of this reality, which will only be unveiled in the Hereafter.

After directing man's attention to the heavens, the next verse: وَّ جَعَلَ الْقَمَرَ فِيْهِنَّ نُوْرًا وَّ جَعَلَ الشَّمْسَ سِرَاجًا directs his attention to the great signs they contain: it is the Almighty Who has made the moon a light therein and the sun a lamp in order to illuminate them. This also is a reference to God's great wisdom and universal providence besides His power. Thus had this arrangement not been made, this world would have remained plunged in darkness. If even after these obvious signs, there are people who do regard the Hereafter to be an impossibility, then there is nothing which can open their eyes. It needs to be kept in consideration here that all the signs of God's mercy and providence in this world necessitate a Day of accountability. This argument has been discussed at various places in this exegesis.

After directing man's attention to the heavens and its signs, in the subsequent verses (۱۷-۱۸) وَ اللّٰهُ اَنْۢبَتَكُمْ مِّنَ الْاَرْضِ نَبَاتًا ثُمَّ يُعِيْدُكُمْ فِيْهَا وَ يُخْرِجُكُمْ اِخْرَاجًا. attention is directed at the signs of the earth. First of all, the most noble of the earth's creatures: human beings are presented. It is said that the Almighty has grown them from the earth and later, to the earth He returns them and then He will bring them forth from it one day.

The inimitability of the eloquence of the Qur'ān is evident from this verse as well. The claim made in them itself constitutes a very clear argument. If all this is unfolded, the overall discourse will be something to the effect: just as vegetation sprouts from the earth, the Almighty has grown man from it, and just as everything that sprouts from the earth dies and is brought back to it, in a similar manner, man will also become the dust of the earth; then just as man witnesses that whenever the Almighty wants, He enlivens dead vegetation, in a similar manner, whenever He wants, He will bring man back to life without any bother.

The verbal nouns نَبَاتًا and اِخْرَاجًا are meant to emphasize their respective verbs. The aspects through which verbs are emphasized are different and for this reason, it is difficult to translate such expressions in Urdu.[17] Thus, for example, the expression اَنْۢبَتَكُمْ مِّنَ الْاَرْضِ نَبَاتًا can also mean "you were grown from the earth with great might and wisdom," and it can also mean "you were grown from this earth with great ease," and it can also mean "you were grown from this earth in an elaborate manner." I have preferred the translation which reflects the elaborate manner in which man was created as well as the might and wisdom with which he was created because parallel verses of the Qur'ān reinforce this interpretation. I have explained this in detail under وَ قَدْ خَلَقَكُمْ اَطْوَارًا earlier. In the translation of وَ يُخْرِجُكُمْ اِخْرَاجًا, I have preferred the meaning of ease for similar reasons; however, other interpretations are also possible. I am unable to find a style that can encompass all the aspects of this construction.

17. The case of English is no different. (*Translator*)

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In the verses: وَاللّٰهُ جَعَلَ لَكُمُ الْاَرْضَ بِسَاطًا لِّتَسْلُكُوْا مِنْهَا سُبُلًا فِجَاجًا attention is directed at the earth itself – a manifest sign which also attests to the great power and wisdom of the Almighty as well as to His infinite mercy and favours. It is said that the earth has been spread out beneath man's feet and to keep it firm and to maintain its balance, mountains have been nailed into it; within these mountains, paths and passes have been made so that man is not trapped behind these great walls and is able to go from one place to another.

It should be kept in mind that in order to make the earth a flooring, it is essential that it be balanced. Thus the Qur'ān has specially pointed out that for this purpose the Almighty has set firm mountains on it. In Sūrah al-Naḥl, it is said: وَاَلْقٰى فِي الْاَرْضِ رَوَاسِيَ اَنْ تَمِيْدَ بِكُمْ (١٥:١٦) (He set firm mountains upon the earth lest it should move away with you, (16:15). In Sūrah al-Nabā', the words are: اَلَمْ نَجْعَلِ الْاَرْضَ مِهٰدًا وَّ الْجِبَالَ اَوْتَادًا. (٧-٦:٧٨) (have We not made the earth a cradle and made the mountains pegs? (78:6-7)). Similarly, there are other verses in the Qur'ān also which point out this aspect. A further favour of the Almighty was that when He set mountains on the earth, He set them in a manner that man could go across these mountains through various naturally built passes between them. The word فِجَاجًا is the plural of فَجٌّ. This word is not used for general paths; it is used for passes and paths between mountains. I have already explained this in Sūrah al-Ḥajj under the expression: فَجٍّ عَمِيْقٍ.

قَالَ نُوْحٌ رَّبِّ اِنَّهُمْ عَصَوْنِيْ وَاتَّبَعُوْا مَنْ لَّمْ يَزِدْهُ مَالُهٗ وَوَلَدُهٗٓ اِلَّا خَسَارًا ﴿٢١﴾[18]

After the insertion verses ended on the previous verse, the discourse now connects back to Noah's supplication. Thus the words قَالَ نُوْحٌ رَّبِّ have come to specify that Noah's supplication is commencing.

Here, Noah (sws) is mentioning the reaction of his people which occurred in the third and last phase of his preaching mission. In this phase, Noah had communicated the truth to his people completely and they had been left with no excuse to deny it; instead of following him, they defied him and continued to follow their leaders – leaders whose wealth and affluence only added to their ruin. The implication is that, instead of being grateful for these favours, they became even more arrogant and stubborn on their ways and were not inclined to hear a single word of Noah's call. In verses 14 and 15 of Sūrah Qalam, it is said that since the Quraysh have abundant wealth and children, when they are asked to have fear of the evil fate they will meet for denying their prophet and when the tales of previous nations who had also denied their respective prophets are recounted before them, they reply with great conceit that these are fables of the ancients and that they will not be over-awed by them.

18. Noah said: O Lord! They have disobeyed me and followed those whose wealth and children only added to their ruin.

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وَمَكَرُوْا مَكْرًا كُبَّارًا ﴿٢٢﴾[19]

The word كُبَّارٌ is an exaggerated form of كَبِيْرٌ. In other words, they contrived great schemes to defeat the preaching mission of Noah (sws), to make the masses disgruntled by his calls and to incite them against him. The details of these machinations are not mentioned here; however, it is not difficult to comprehend them. The arrogant people of every era try to contrive various schemes to lead their people away from the truth. One can easily imagine from these schemes what Noah's people would have contrived against him.

وَقَالُوْا لَا تَذَرُنَّ اٰلِهَتَكُمْ وَلَا تَذَرُنَّ وَدًّا وَّلَا سُوَاعًا ۙ وَّلَا يَغُوْثَ وَيَعُوْقَ وَنَسْرًا ﴿٢٣﴾[20]

This is the detail of the stubbornness and obduracy of the leaders of Noah's people referred to in the previous verse. Mentioned in this verse are their great idols. They were regarded to be deities by their masses in every sense of the word. For this reason, they called out their names and called upon their masses to fully adhere to them. They are told that if they show compromise in the slightest sense, their ancestral religion might face grave danger.

It is clearly evident from the names of these idols that they are Arabic names. Noah's people inhabited the north of Hijāz; so it is not improbable that their language was Arabic. The tenacity of these idols is remarkable as the deluge had destroyed every sign of Noah's people, yet these idols were still worshipped. It is evident from history that later on they were once again worshipped by various Arab tribes. Thus the Banū Kalb, a branch of the Quḍā'ah tribe, worshipped the idol of Wadd. Suwā' was worshipped by the Hudhayl tribe and Yagūth was worshipped by some branches of the Ṭay tribe. Similarly, Ya'ūq was worshipped by one branch of the Hamdān tribe and Nasr was worshipped by one branch of the Ḥimyar tribe. The sequence in which these idols are mentioned here shows their ranks and status in descending order. In other words, Wadd and Suwā' occupied a higher status than Yagūth, Ya'ūq and Nasr.

وَقَدْ اَضَلُّوْا كَثِيْرًا ۚ وَلَا تَزِدِ الظّٰلِمِيْنَ اِلَّا ضَلٰلًا ﴿٢٤﴾[21]

In this verse, Noah (sws) has expressed sorrow at the attitude of the leaders of his people. Simultaneously, he prayed to the Almighty to increase these wrongdoers in further error so that they can swiftly become worthy of divine punishment and the earth is cleansed of their stink.

The Almighty has not created man in this world to become a burden on it. He has

19. And they contrived great schemes.

20.And said: "Abandon not these gods of yours whatsoever and abandon not Wadd nor Suwā'; and neither Yaghūth nor Ya'ūq nor Nasr."

21. And they misled many. And only increase these wrongdoers in further error.

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been created to struggle for success in life.

وَ قَالَ مُوْسٰى رَبَّنَآ اِنَّكَ اٰتَيْتَ فِرْعَوْنَ وَ مَلَاَهٗ زِيْنَةً وَّ اَمْوَالًا فِي الْحَيٰوةِ الدُّنْيَا ۙ رَبَّنَا لِيُضِلُّوْا عَنْ سَبِيْلِكَ ۚ رَبَّنَا اطْمِسْ عَلٰٓى اَمْوَالِهِمْ وَ اشْدُدْ عَلٰى قُلُوْبِهِمْ فَلَا يُؤْمِنُوْا حَتّٰى يَرَوُا الْعَذَابَ الْاَلِيْمَ. (۱۰:۸۸)

And "Lord," said Moses: "You have bestowed on Pharaoh and his nobles splendour and riches in this life, so that they may stray from Your path. Lord, destroy their riches and harden their hearts, so that they shall persist in disbelief until they face the woeful scourge." (10:88)

مِمَّا خَطِيْٓـٰٔتِهِمْ اُغْرِقُوْا فَاُدْخِلُوْا نَارًا ۙ فَلَمْ يَجِدُوْا لَهُمْ مِّنْ دُوْنِ اللّٰهِ اَنْصَارًا ﴿۲۵﴾[22]

These words do not form part of Noah's prayer. They are insertions (*taḍmīn*) from the Almighty, just as there were insertions from Him earlier on. They show that Noah (sws) had prayed at the right time and for the right purpose. So, as soon as he had uttered the first sentence of this prayer, it was accepted by the Almighty. If these glad tidings had been placed at the end of Noah's prayer, their acceptance would not have been highlighted. Thus, it was placed right after the first sentence of the prayer. Examples of such insertions can be seen in earlier *sūrahs* also.

The verse says that it was because of God's wrath that these people were faced with the torments of both fire and water: in this world they were drowned and on the Day of Judgement, they will be cast into the fire of Hell.

The implication of the part of the verse فَلَمْ يَجِدُوْا لَهُمْ مِّنْ دُوْنِ اللّٰهِ اَنْصَارًا is that, when they were warned about the punishment they would show conceit on the basis of their worldly power and alleged deities; however, when the punishment of God would come, they will find no one to help them.

وَ قَالَ نُوْحٌ رَّبِّ لَا تَذَرْ عَلَى الْاَرْضِ مِنَ الْكٰفِرِيْنَ دَيَّارًا ﴿۲۶﴾ اِنَّكَ اِنْ تَذَرْهُمْ يُضِلُّوْا عِبَادَكَ وَ لَا يَلِدُوْٓا اِلَّا فَاجِرًا كَفَّارًا ﴿۲۷﴾[23]

After the insertion verses, the prayer of Noah (sws) resumes from this verse. Thus, the words وَ قَالَ نُوْحٌ رَّبِّ clearly indicate this resumption. Had the insertion verses not been present, there was no need to repeat these words; they have been repeated to dispel any confusion.

If it is said in Arabic ما فی الدّار دیار it would mean that there is no one in the house. This prayer is said in such sweeping words because of reasons cited earlier. A *rasūl* decides the fate of his nation in this world because he communicates the truth to his people to

22. Because of their misdeeds they were drowned; then were cast into a great Fire. Then they found none to help them against God.

23. And Noah said: O Lord! Leave not one of these disbelievers in the land. If You spare them, they will mislead Your servants and will beget none but sinners and disbelievers.

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the extent that they are left with no excuse to deny it; after this, they become worthy of punishment. In this verse, Noah (sws) has implored to the Almighty that if He spares any of them, they will only beget disbelievers and the wretched. It should remain clear that though each child is born with the true nature endowed to him by God, his parents, his environment and the society play the greatest role in his instruction and training. If his surroundings are good, it is hoped that he will be raised on true faith and if these surroundings are replete with disbelief, then as is evident from a narrative,[24] the child will be fully influenced by them. Noah (sws) had fully evaluated his people and seen that not the slightest trace of piety and faith remained in them; for this reason, he said that these people will only beget sinners and disbelievers; they will not produce a single pious soul.

رَبِّ اغْفِرْ لِيْ وَلِوَالِدَيَّ وَلِمَنْ دَخَلَ بَيْتِيَ مُؤْمِنًا وَّلِلْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ وَالْمُؤْمِنٰتِ ۭ وَلَا تَزِدِ الظّٰلِمِيْنَ اِلَّا تَبَارًا ﴿٢٨﴾[25]

Here, at the end, Noah (sws) has sought forgiveness for himself, his parents, those who will seek refuge in his house as believers as well as for all believing men and women. He has ended his prayer on inviting doom for those who remained adamant on their polytheism and disbelief and thereby called for this fate.

It is evident from Noah's seeking forgiveness for his parents that the parents have a great right on their children, as has been emphasized in several places in the Qur'ān. Some people are of the opinion that his parents were believers; however, there is no indication for this in the Qur'ān. It is possible that they had died before Noah (sws) began his preaching mission or before he completed it. In both these cases, praying for their forgiveness was to fulfill this right they had on him. It is evident that the Almighty also had not stopped him from this prayer in these phases.

It is evident from the words that in the last phase Noah (sws) had announced among his people that those who want to seek refuge from the punishment should seek shelter in his house.

By the grace of God, I come to the end of this *sūrah's* explanation.

وآخر دعوانا أن الحمد لله رب العلمين (and our last word is that all gratitude is for God, the Lord of the universe).

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24. Reference is to the narrative reported by Abū Hurayrah (rta) from the Prophet (sws):

ما من مَوْلُودٍ إلا يُولَدُ على الْفِطْرَةِ فَأَبَوَاهُ يُهَوِّدَانِهِ او ينصرانه او يُمَجِّسَانِهِ

Every child is born on [true] nature; it is his parents who make him a Jew or a Christian or a Magian. See: Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi' al-ṣaḥīḥ*. vol. 1, 456, (no. 1293).

25. Forgive me, Lord, and forgive my parents and everyone who enters my house as a believer and forgive all believing men and believing women and increase these disbelievers only in ruin.

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Raḥmānābād,
19th September 1978 AD
15th Shawwāl 1398 AH

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Tadabbur i Qur’ān

Sūrah al-Jinn (72)

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Sūrah al-Jinn

Central Theme, Relationship with Previous *Sūrah* and Analysis of the Discourse

This *sūrah* is the counterpart of Sūrah Nūḥ the previous *sūrah*. Both form a complimentary pair. There is no basic difference between the central themes of both *sūrahs.* In the previous *sūrah*, a soul-stirring and a soul-searching picture of the stubbornness and arrogance shown by the leaders of Noah's nation, of the way they closed their ears to the calls of their Messenger and of the fate they reached is presented before the leaders of the Quraysh. Now, in this *sūrah*, they are being shown that the same Qur'ān from which they feel such great aversion cast such a potent influence on a group of jinn that it embarked upon spreading its message among its brethren. So aversive were Noah's people in this regard that they would thrust their fingers in their ears and leap at the person who would recite it out to them, disgustedly running away when they would hear it. The incident of the jinn hearing the Qur'ān as mentioned in this *sūrah* has already been alluded to in Sūrah al-Aḥqāf (46:29-32). I have already mentioned in the explanation of these verses why this incident has been related before the leaders of the Quraysh. The first reason was to incite their sense of honour: if the jinn, who are not even the direct addressees of the Qur'ān could be so deeply moved on accidentally hearing it, how is it that these leaders of the Quraysh for which the whole Qur'ān has been specifically revealed are showing indifference to it. Day and night, a messenger of God is calling them towards it, while they are so unfortunate that instead of opening their hearts to his calls, they have become avowed enemies of those who are presenting it. The second reason for relating this incident before the leaders of the Quraysh was to assure the Prophet (sws). If the miscreants of his nation were not treasuring the Qur'ān, he should not be sad; people whose hearts are dead will not benefit from it, however much they try. On the other hand, those who even have the slightest ability to appreciate the truth will benefit from it, even if they accidentally chance by to hear it, whether they are its addressees or not and whether any arrangement is made to read it out to them or not.

People who are only slaves to their faculties of sensation and who deny the existence of things beyond these faculties will not be affected by the manner in which a group of jinn were moved by the Qur'ān; they are not even addressed here. The addressees here are the idolaters of the Quraysh who were not so dumb as to believe only in things they could see or touch. They not only believed in the existence of the jinn, they had also set up a whole system of soothsaying through which they maintained contacts with them.

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For this reason, the Qur'ān has narrated to them this incident as something very important. If they want, they too can benefit from this information. Through soothsayers, they would receive various information from the miscreants among the jinn. The Qur'ān has presented before them a report of the righteous among them so that those among these leaders of the Quraysh who have the ability to distinguish between good and evil are guided to embrace faith. The Qur'ān has related before them some facts of the unknown and unseen world so that the seekers of the truth can gain benefit from this. Although the slaves to the faculties of sense only will call all this a product of one's imagination, providence does not deprive people of its blessings if some unworthy elements fail to recognize and value it.

Text and Translation

بِسۡمِ اللّٰہِ الرَّحۡمٰنِ الرَّحِیۡمِ

قُلۡ اُوۡحِیَ اِلَیَّ اَنَّہُ اسۡتَمَعَ نَفَرٌ مِّنَ الۡجِنِّ فَقَالُوۡۤا اِنَّا سَمِعۡنَا قُرۡاٰنًا عَجَبًا ۙ﴿۱﴾ یَّہۡدِیۡۤ اِلَی الرُّشۡدِ فَاٰمَنَّا بِہٖ ؕ وَ لَنۡ نُّشۡرِکَ بِرَبِّنَاۤ اَحَدًا ۙ﴿۲﴾ وَّ اَنَّہٗ تَعٰلٰی جَدُّ رَبِّنَا مَا اتَّخَذَ صَاحِبَۃً وَّ لَا وَلَدًا ۙ﴿۳﴾ وَّ اَنَّہٗ کَانَ یَقُوۡلُ سَفِیۡہُنَا عَلَی اللّٰہِ شَطَطًا ۙ﴿۴﴾ وَّ اَنَّا ظَنَنَّاۤ اَنۡ لَّنۡ تَقُوۡلَ الۡاِنۡسُ وَ الۡجِنُّ عَلَی اللّٰہِ کَذِبًا ۙ﴿۵﴾ وَّ اَنَّہٗ کَانَ رِجَالٌ مِّنَ الۡاِنۡسِ یَعُوۡذُوۡنَ بِرِجَالٍ مِّنَ الۡجِنِّ فَزَادُوۡہُمۡ رَہَقًا ۙ﴿۶﴾ وَّ اَنَّہُمۡ ظَنُّوۡا کَمَا ظَنَنۡتُمۡ اَنۡ لَّنۡ یَّبۡعَثَ اللّٰہُ اَحَدًا ۙ﴿۷﴾ وَّ اَنَّا لَمَسۡنَا السَّمَآءَ فَوَجَدۡنٰہَا مُلِئَتۡ حَرَسًا شَدِیۡدًا وَّ شُہُبًا ۙ﴿۸﴾ وَّ اَنَّا کُنَّا نَقۡعُدُ مِنۡہَا مَقَاعِدَ لِلسَّمۡعِ ؕ فَمَنۡ یَّسۡتَمِعِ الۡاٰنَ یَجِدۡ لَہٗ شِہَابًا رَّصَدًا ۙ﴿۹﴾ وَّ اَنَّا لَا نَدۡرِیۡۤ اَشَرٌّ اُرِیۡدَ بِمَنۡ فِی الۡاَرۡضِ اَمۡ اَرَادَ بِہِمۡ رَبُّہُمۡ رَشَدًا ۙ﴿۱۰﴾ وَّ اَنَّا مِنَّا الصّٰلِحُوۡنَ وَ مِنَّا دُوۡنَ ذٰلِکَ ؕ کُنَّا طَرَآئِقَ قِدَدًا ۙ﴿۱۱﴾ وَّ اَنَّا ظَنَنَّاۤ اَنۡ لَّنۡ نُّعۡجِزَ اللّٰہَ فِی الۡاَرۡضِ وَ لَنۡ نُّعۡجِزَہٗ ہَرَبًا ۙ﴿۱۲﴾ وَّ اَنَّا لَمَّا سَمِعۡنَا الۡہُدٰۤی اٰمَنَّا بِہٖ ؕ فَمَنۡ یُّؤۡمِنۡۢ بِرَبِّہٖ فَلَا یَخَافُ بَخۡسًا وَّ لَا رَہَقًا ۙ﴿۱۳﴾ وَّ اَنَّا مِنَّا الۡمُسۡلِمُوۡنَ وَ مِنَّا الۡقٰسِطُوۡنَ ؕ فَمَنۡ اَسۡلَمَ فَاُولٰٓئِکَ تَحَرَّوۡا رَشَدًا ۙ﴿۱۴﴾ وَ اَمَّا الۡقٰسِطُوۡنَ فَکَانُوۡا لِجَہَنَّمَ حَطَبًا ۙ﴿۱۵﴾ وَّ اَنۡ لَّوِ اسۡتَقَامُوۡا عَلَی الطَّرِیۡقَۃِ لَاَسۡقَیۡنٰہُمۡ مَّآءً غَدَقًا ۙ﴿۱۶﴾ لِّنَفۡتِنَہُمۡ فِیۡہِ ؕ وَ مَنۡ یُّعۡرِضۡ عَنۡ ذِکۡرِ رَبِّہٖ یَسۡلُکۡہُ عَذَابًا صَعَدًا ۙ﴿۱۷﴾ وَّ اَنَّ الۡمَسٰجِدَ لِلّٰہِ فَلَا تَدۡعُوۡا مَعَ اللّٰہِ اَحَدًا ۙ﴿۱۸﴾ وَّ اَنَّہٗ لَمَّا قَامَ عَبۡدُ اللّٰہِ یَدۡعُوۡہُ کَادُوۡا یَکُوۡنُوۡنَ عَلَیۡہِ لِبَدًا ؕ﴿۱۹﴾ قُلۡ اِنَّمَاۤ اَدۡعُوۡا رَبِّیۡ وَ لَاۤ اُشۡرِکُ بِہٖۤ اَحَدًا ۙ﴿۲۰﴾ قُلۡ اِنِّیۡ لَاۤ اَمۡلِکُ لَکُمۡ ضَرًّا وَّ لَا رَشَدًا ۙ﴿۲۱﴾ قُلۡ اِنِّیۡ لَنۡ یُّجِیۡرَنِیۡ مِنَ اللّٰہِ اَحَدٌ ۙ وَّ لَنۡ اَجِدَ مِنۡ دُوۡنِہٖ مُلۡتَحَدًا ۙ﴿۲۲﴾ اِلَّا بَلٰغًا مِّنَ اللّٰہِ وَ رِسٰلٰتِہٖ ؕ وَ مَنۡ یَّعۡصِ اللّٰہَ وَ رَسُوۡلَہٗ فَاِنَّ لَہٗ نَارَ جَہَنَّمَ خٰلِدِیۡنَ فِیۡہَاۤ اَبَدًا ؕ﴿۲۳﴾ حَتّٰۤی اِذَا رَاَوۡا مَا یُوۡعَدُوۡنَ فَسَیَعۡلَمُوۡنَ مَنۡ اَضۡعَفُ نَاصِرًا وَّ اَقَلُّ عَدَدًا ۙ﴿۲۴﴾ قُلۡ اِنۡ اَدۡرِیۡۤ اَقَرِیۡبٌ مَّا تُوۡعَدُوۡنَ اَمۡ یَجۡعَلُ لَہٗ رَبِّیۡۤ اَمَدًا ۙ﴿۲۵﴾ عٰلِمُ الۡغَیۡبِ فَلَا یُظۡہِرُ عَلٰی غَیۡبِہٖۤ اَحَدًا ۙ﴿۲۶﴾ اِلَّا مَنِ ارۡتَضٰی مِنۡ رَّسُوۡلٍ فَاِنَّہٗ یَسۡلُکُ مِنۡۢ بَیۡنِ یَدَیۡہِ وَ مِنۡ خَلۡفِہٖ رَصَدًا ۙ﴿۲۷﴾ لِّیَعۡلَمَ اَنۡ قَدۡ اَبۡلَغُوۡا رِسٰلٰتِ رَبِّہِمۡ وَ اَحَاطَ بِمَا لَدَیۡہِمۡ وَ اَحۡصٰی کُلَّ شَیۡءٍ عَدَدًا ﴿۲۸﴾

In the name of God, the Most Gracious, the Ever Merciful.

Tell them: "It has been revealed to me that when a group of jinn listened to the

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Qur'ān, they said to their people: 'We have heard a Qur'ān wondrous, which shows guidance to the right path; so we have professed faith in it and we will not by any means associate anyone with our Lord and that exalted is the majesty of our Lord; He has neither taken a wife for Himself nor does He have any children. And that this foolish [leader] of ours has been saying absolutely false things about God. And that we thought that no man or jinn could forge a lie against God. And that there were some among men who had been seeking refuge with some among the *jinn* so they only increased them in their rebellion. And that like you, they also thought that God would never raise the dead. And we deeply observed the heavens and found it filled with stern guards and meteors. And we were able to sit in some of its stations to eavesdrop, but now whoever tries to eavesdrop finds a meteor waiting for him. And that we do not know whether any ill has been intended for those on earth or whether their Lord has intended something good for them. And that there are pious among us also and some who are otherwise; our paths are separate. And that we acknowledge that we cannot escape God's grasp by setting off to some place in this earth or by running away somewhere in the heavens. And that when we heard words of guidance, we believed in it. So, he who believes in his God their Lord will have no fear of any loss or any injustice. And that there are obedient among us and also disobedient; so, those who are obedient will find themselves on the right path and those who are disobedient will become the firewood of Hell.'" (1-15)

And it has also been revealed to me that if these [Quraysh] had adhered to the straight path, We would have bestowed on them rain in abundance so that We could test them by this, and those who turn away from the Reminder of their Lord, He will put them through an ever-increasing torment. And that mosques are only for the worship of God; so invoke not any one with God. And that when this servant of God stands to invoke only Him, it seems as if they will rush upon him. Tell them: "I invoke my Lord only and will not associate partners with Him." Tell them: "I have no authority to harm or benefit." Tell them: "None can protect me from God nor can I find any refuge besides Him." Only to inform you from God and to communicate His messages to you. And those who disobey God and His Prophet shall abide forever in the fire of Hell. Until these people behold that what they are being warned of, then they shall know who is the weakest in help and who is the fewest in numbers. Tell them: "I do not know whether that with which you are being threatened is imminent, or whether My Lord will postpone it a little more." Only He knows the unknown, and He never reveals His unknown to anyone. As for those whom He chooses as His messengers, He guards them from behind and from the front that He may know if they have delivered the messages of their Lord; and He surrounds them from all sides and keeps count of all their things. (16-28)

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Explanation

قُلْ اُوْحِیَ اِلَیَّ اَنَّهُ اسْتَمَعَ نَفَرٌ مِّنَ الْجِنِّ فَقَالُوْٓا اِنَّا سَمِعْنَا قُرْاٰنًا عَجَبًا ۙ[1]

The words قُلْ اُوْحِیَ (tell them) clearly indicate the fact that the impressions of the jinn cited in this *sūrah* are not narrated to the Prophet (sws) directly from their tongue; these impressions have been revealed to the Prophet (sws) by the Almighty. A group of jinn chanced by the Prophet (sws) while he was reciting the Qur'ān. They were so moved by it that they intently listened to what was being recited. Such was the pronounced effect of its wondrous words on them that they embarked upon calling their own brethren towards it.

When did this incident happen? It is difficult to give a certain answer to this question. In my opinion, this is a detailed version of the same incident referred to rather concisely in Sūrah al-Aḥqāf. I have already referred to its background and context in the exegesis of that *sūrah* in the light of various narratives. These impressions of the jinn have been conveyed to the Prophet (sws) so that he may inform his people of them. The implication is that the same Qur'ān which they are treating in such a disdainful manner by shutting their ears to it, and have set off to become the enemies of its reciter, even though it was specifically revealed for them had a profound influence on some bright jinn. So potent was this influence that they became ardent fans of it and embarked upon calling their people towards it, even though they were not the direct addressees of this Book.

The word قُلْ clearly shows that the Prophet (sw) has been informed of these impressions of the jinn so that he conveys them to the leaders of the Quraysh to awaken their sense of honour. In a passing manner, these words also assure the Prophet (sws) that he should not feel sad if his message is not receiving recognition by such worthless people. If they are not valuing this Book, then neither is the Book to be blamed nor the Prophet (sws); it is because of their own evil nature.

The words فَقَالُوْٓا اِنَّا سَمِعْنَا قُرْاٰنًا عَجَبًا depict the message the jinn conveyed to their nation. In other words, they did not merely praise the words they heard; they thought it was a natural requirement of recognizing the truth and of being well-wishers to their people that they should share with them the divine favour they had been blessed with by God.

The word عَجَبٌ is a verbal noun and in contrast to عَجِیْبٌ has more emphasis and exaggeration in it. The jinn used this word for the Qur'ān's efficacy, forcefulness and being replete with wisdom. In Arabic, this word does not mean "strange" (which is its Urdu meaning); it expresses the effectiveness and beauty of something. In Sūrah al-Aḥqāf, this aspect is discussed in the following words:

1. Tell them: It has been revealed to me that when a group of jinn listened to Qur'ān, they said to their people: We have heard a Qur'ān wondrous.

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قَالُوْا يٰقَوْمَنَآ اِنَّا سَمِعْنَا كِتٰبًا اُنْزِلَ مِنْۢ بَعْدِ مُوْسٰى مُصَدِّقًا لِّمَا بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ يَهْدِيْٓ اِلَى الْحَقِّ وَاِلٰى طَرِيْقٍ مُّسْتَقِيْمٍ.
(٣٠:٤٦)

They said: "O People! We have just been listening to a book revealed after the time of Moses in confirmation of the previous predictions and pointing to the truth and to a straight path." (46:30)

It is also indirectly evident from the verse under discussion that the jinn are not only conversant with their own language, they are also conversant with the language of the human beings belonging to the area where the jinn live and that also among them are those who are connoisseurs of this language.

يَّهْدِيْٓ اِلَى الرُّشْدِ فَاٰمَنَّا بِهٖ ؕ وَلَنْ نُّشْرِكَ بِرَبِّنَآ اَحَدًا ۙ﴿٢﴾[2]

This verse explains how the Qur'ān is so effective, as referred to by the word عَجَبًا of the previous verse: this Book is guiding people to the truth which is acceptable to the heart of every good-natured person. In the verse of Sūrah al-Aḥqāf, the words used are: يَهْدِيْٓ اِلَى الْحَقِّ وَاِلٰى طَرِيْقٍ مُّسْتَقِيْمٍ. Here, the word رُشْدٌ (*rushd*) comprehensively covers this subject. It encompasses all basic beliefs and virtues which are innately found in human nature. If a person does not pervert his nature by wrongly using his freedom of choice, it guides him to the straight path. If, at times, he does commit a blemish, a little reminder and admonition brings him back on the right track; the only condition is that he should value and recognize this feature of his nature and not be led away by his base desires. The highest status occupied in this *rushd* is that of *tawḥīd*. It is the fountainhead of all basic beliefs and deeds and their correctness too depends on it.

The obligation owed by the jinn to the رُشْدٌ is expressed by the words: فَاٰمَنَّا بِهٖ. It is the natural right of being blessed with this guidance to profess faith in it. The jinn accepted it with sincerity.

The primary and foremost part of رُشْدٌ is *tawḥīd*, as indicated earlier. Consequently, the jinn, while stating a requirement of this رُشْدٌ expressed that it was not possible for them now to associate partners with God. The Qur'ānic words used are وَلَنْ نُّشْرِكَ بِرَبِّنَآ اَحَدًا.

It needs to be appreciated that all basic beliefs and virtues are common not only among all human beings but also the jinn. The Qur'ān has in fact, clarified that they are common to every cognizant being of this universe. The difference in directives between human beings and jinn relates to the social sphere only. There is no reason for any difference between them as far as beliefs in *tawḥīd*, in the Day of Judgement and in the reward and punishment which will take place on that Day as well as in morals and morality. Thus it is these things which are mentioned here. The Qur'ān

2. Which shows guidance to the right path; so we have professed faith in it and we will not by any means associate any one with our Lord.

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also invited people in the initial period of the Makkan life of the Prophet (sws) to these basic requirements ingrained in human nature.

وَّاَنَّهٗ تَعٰلٰى جَدُّ رَبِّنَا مَا اتَّخَذَ صَاحِبَةً وَّلَا وَلَدًا ﴿٣﴾[3]

Expressed in this verse is a further explanation of their statement وَلَنْ نُّشْرِكَ بِرَبِّنَآ اَحَدًا (and we will not by any means associate any one with our Lord) cited in the previous verse. It has become absolutely evident to them that so exalted is their Lord that He does not require any family. Foolish are the people who attribute such things to Him. He neither has a wife nor any children.

The word تَعٰلٰى signifies "greatness, grandeur and high status." The implication is that He is so lofty that no one can be His peer or equal in status to Him. He is solitary and peerless and is not dependent on anything. He has no equal and is matchless. Although this is a statement of the jinn and hence should be related to the sentence فَقَالُوْٓا اِنَّا سَمِعْنَا (they said: We heard …); however, since these impressions of the jinn did not come directly to the Prophet's knowledge and were revealed to him by God, this statement should be related to قُلْ اُوْحِيَ اِلَيَّ اَنَّهُ (tell them: it has been revealed to me that …) as are all subsequent statements of the jinn.

وَّاَنَّهٗ كَانَ يَقُوْلُ سَفِيْهُنَا عَلَى اللّٰهِ شَطَطًا ﴿٤﴾[4]

The word سَفِيْهٌ means "foolish." Here, the jinn have used it for their leader because his foolishness became evident to them after they had heard the Qur'ān.

The word شَطَطٌ means something which does not conform to justice and truth.

When the jinn were fully convinced of *tawḥīd*, they informed their people that their foolish leader would ascribe absolutely false and baseless allegations to the majesty of God. Amongst these allegations was that He had a wife and children and that such and such were His favourite sons and such and such were His favourite daughters; however, the Qur'ān they have heard clearly shows that all these were false allegations concocted by their false leader. So they repented from such nonsensical things and invited their people too to repent and not be lured away by this foolish leader.

It is evident from this verse that the group of jinn mentioned in these verses was from their common masses. They did tread the path they were led into by their leaders; however, once the truth became evident to them, they stopped obeying their leaders with the spark of courage that was ignited in them by true faith, and turned towards the straight path. The common masses of the Quraysh are informed of these

3. And that exalted is the majesty of our Lord; He has neither taken a wife for Himself nor does He have any children.

4. And that this foolish [leader] of ours has been saying absolutely false things about God.

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impressions of the jinn through the Prophet (sws) so that they too break the shackles of blindly following their leaders and are inculcated with the confidence of relying on their own vision and intellect.

وَّاَنَّا ظَنَنَّآ اَنْ لَّنْ تَقُوْلَ الْاِنْسُ وَالْجِنُّ عَلَى اللّٰهِ كَذِبًا ۝[5]

Expressed in this verse is the misconception they were led into by their leaders. They thought that men or jinn could never impute such falsities to God that He had appointed certain partners and also regarded them to be worthy of worship; on the contrary, these people were audacious enough to do such things and they were lured away by them.

Through these words, they wanted to convey to their masses that they should not blindly follow their religious pundits by being deceived about their sanctity. They should use their senses, lest these pundits cause them an irreparable loss.

وَّاَنَّهٗ كَانَ رِجَالٌ مِّنَ الْاِنْسِ يَعُوْذُوْنَ بِرِجَالٍ مِّنَ الْجِنِّ فَزَادُوْهُمْ رَهَقًا ۝[6]

This is another piece of information they divulged to their people.

The real meaning of the word رَهَقٌ is "to burden someone with what he cannot bear." It was from this original meaning that it came to be used for "sin, oppression, cruelty and usurping rights." Consequently, in verse 13, it is used for injustice.

Generally, people have interpreted this verse to mean that some foolish human beings took refuge with the jinn and thereby made these jinn arrogant and supercilious. This interpretation does not seem to be correct. Firstly, the discourse does not give any useful information and secondly, the word رَهَقٌ exceeds its real meaning in this interpretation. In my opinion, the subject of the verb زَادُوْا is رِجَالٌ مِّنَ الْجِنِّ and the antecedent of the pronoun هُمْ is رِجَالٌ مِّنَ الْاِنْسِ. In other words, some foolish men sought refuge with the jinn so that they could save them from calamities sent by the jinn; however, when the latter saw that they were luring some people away, then instead of protecting these people from their evil they lured them into it.

The idolaters of Arabia had the superstition that the jinn were a means of finding out news of the unknown and the unseen world. As a result, a whole system of soothsaying which was totally based on lies and deception, had come into being. Typically, a soothsayer would tell a person under his lure that a certain jinn is angry with him and that, if he did not do a particular sacrifice or make a vow, then this jinn would cause him some harm. As a result, this person would obey the soothsayer. So much so, in order to please the jinn, foolish people at the behest of these soothsayers would at times even

5. And that we thought that no man or jinn could forge a lie against God.

6. And that there were some among men who had been seeking refuge with some among the jinn so they only increased them in their rebellion.

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sacrifice their children. This has been alluded to in Sūrah al-An'ām.

Another superstition with which they thought these idolaters of Arabia were afflicted was that every valley and every mountain was inhabited by some specific group of jinn. If ever circumstances arose that someone had to spend the night at some such place, then it was deemed necessary to seek the refuge of the leader of these jinn. In case this refuge was not sought, there was a strong chance that these jinn would send some calamity on them. Consequently, in the age of ignorance when the Arabs would spend a night in some valley they would invoke the chief jinn of that valley and would think that they had sought refuge with him. Obviously, this was another needless burden which such people would have to bear because of this superstition.

It is to such superstitions that the pious jinn mentioned in this *sūrah* have alluded. The objective is to show that because of a lack of comprehension of the concept of *tawḥīd,* an alliance has come into being between some foolish human beings and some mischievous jinn. The purpose was also to show the various spiritual and material evils that were coming into existence as a result to uproot which the Almighty had revealed this Book.

The reason that the word رِجَالٌ is not defined can be both for magnification (*tafkhīm*) and derision (*taḥqīr*). In other words, the verse can be interpreted in two ways: a) some foolish among human beings would invoke and seek refuge with some foolish among the jinn and b) some mischievous among human beings would invoke and seek refuge with some mischievous among the jinn. In fact, it would be totally in accordance with the principles of Arabic if this verse is interpreted thus: some foolish among human beings would invoke and seek refuge with some mischievous among the jinn.

وَّاَنَّهُمْ ظَنُّوْا كَمَا ظَنَنْتُمْ اَنْ لَّنْ يَّبْعَثَ اللّٰهُ اَحَدًا ۝[7]

After *tawḥīd*, the jinn have now pointed out the misconceptions of both groups – humankind and jinnkind – regarding the Hereafter. They told their brethren that, just as they were in the misconception that the Almighty would not raise their dead, some men have also remained in this misconception. The implication is that one of the objective for which the Qur'ān has been revealed is to dispel this misconception of people.

Some people have interpreted this verse differently. They think that these jinn were giving a different piece of information to their brethren viz: just as they were under the wrong impression that now the Almighty is not going to send any prophet, similarly some among mankind were also under this wrong impression.

Although the words of this verse can be interpreted thus, however a question arises on it. The foremost addressees of the Qur'ān – whether they were from the Ishmaelites

7. And that like you, they also thought that God would never raise the dead.

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or the Israelites – were waiting for a prophet because of prediction made by earlier prophets. Though the People of the Book tried to hide these predictions but they were not able to deny them. As far as the Ishmaelites were concerned, they did not have a clear conception of this awaited prophet, because of being unlettered, yet they too, did not deny him with certainty. Consequently, at some places in the Qur'ān, they have been condemned for a particular attitude they had adopted: before the advent of this awaited prophet, they had claimed that if the Almighty would send a prophet from within them they would be the first ones to accept him and the ones to follow his guidance the most; however, when the Almighty blessed them with this favour, they became his opponents.

وَّاَنَّا لَمَسْنَا السَّمَآءَ فَوَجَدْنٰهَا مُلِئَتْ حَرَسًا شَدِيْدًا وَّ شُهُبًا ﴿۸﴾ وَّاَنَّا كُنَّا نَقْعُدُ مِنْهَا مَقَاعِدَ لِلسَّمْعِ ؕ فَمَنْ يَّسْتَمِعِ الْاٰنَ يَجِدْ لَهٗ شِهَابًا رَّصَدًا ﴿۹﴾[8]

Mentioned in these verses is what they experienced for the very first time in this universe at the time of revelation of this Book. It has been mentioned at many places in the Qur'ān that when the devils among the jinn try to eavesdrop to gain news of the unknown and unseen world, they are pelted with shooting stars. This personal experience of the jinn substantiates this information of the Qur'ān. It also shows that prior to the revelation of the Qur'ān, there was a possibility of such eavesdropping. However, at the time in which they were narrating their experience, the heavens were filled with meteors and sentinels to such an extent that the jinn were not able to infiltrate the system.

Although the jinn mentioned this great change in the system of the universe they were not able to cite any reason for it. This is evident from the very next verse which says that they were unaware of the wisdom behind what was happening. However, by linking the revelation of the Qur'ān with this great change, they observed they gave the impression to the people that this change was related to the revelation of the Qur'ān.

In my opinion, their deduction was correct. It is evident from many verses of the Qur'ān that the system of surveillance which the Almighty has set up in this universe to stop the jinn from intervening in divine matters became very rigorous at the time of the revelation of the Qur'ān so that this divine Book was protected from such incursions. In general, this system of surveillance has always remained in action. Even before the revelation of the Qur'ān, the devils have been pelted with meteors for such intervention; however, just as governments put roads on which royal treasure is to be transported or on which the royal cavalcade is to pass under special protection, it

8. And we deeply observed the heavens and found it filled with stern guards and meteors. And we were able to sit in some of its stations to eavesdrop, but now whoever tries to eavesdrop finds a meteor waiting for him.

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seems that in the time of revelation of the Qur'ān and at advent of Gabriel also the heavens had been put under special protection to stop such infiltration.

The Qur'ān has cited this information given by the jinn before the idolaters of Arabia because these idolaters would regard the Qur'ān to be a discourse similar to the one produced by soothsayers and that it was inspired by the jinn. By this information this blame was refuted. For its refutation, the mere statement and observation of the jinn themselves mentioned in this verse was enough.

وَّاَنَّا لَا نَدۡرِیۡۤ اَشَرٌّ اُرِیۡدَ بِمَنۡ فِی الۡاَرۡضِ اَمۡ اَرَادَ بِهِمۡ رَبُّهُمۡ رَشَدًا ﴿۱۰﴾[9]

These jinn were not absolutely sure about the reason behind this great change in the universe, as has been pointed out earlier. So, instead of pointing out a clear-cut reason, they just expressed their uncertainty about it; they reckoned that though they did not know the real reason, yet they thought that this change was a prelude to some great revolution in the earth. Whether this revolution would be advantageous or not for the inhabitants of the earth is something which only time will tell.

Though because of exercising care, they did not clearly express their opinion, yet the style in which they expressed their opinion shows that they thought this change would augur well for inhabitants of the earth. Thus they mentioned that something ill may befall them in the passive voice and mentioned that something good will befall them in the active voice. I have already explained in Sūrah al-Kahf the difference between these two styles viz a viz holding respect and reverence for the Almighty. Here, what needs to be specifically kept in consideration is that, if their dominant opinion was not that something good had been intended for the inhabitants of the earth, then this opinion would also have been expressed in the passive voice like the other sentence. However, correlating the revelation of the Qur'ān and the great change that occurred in the universe, they were of the opinion that both these incidents were beneficial for the people of the earth and it was like a union of two propitious events.

وَّاَنَّا مِنَّا الصّٰلِحُوۡنَ وَمِنَّا دُوۡنَ ذٰلِكَ ؕ كُنَّا طَرَآئِقَ قِدَدًا ﴿۱۱﴾[10]

In this verse, these jinn have expressed the opinion that till that time there was no difference between good and evil in their eyes. Both were equal to them; however, the Qur'ān cleared this misconception of theirs and clarified that all of them do not follow the same path and that their paths are separate and that it is essential that they deal with people keeping in view this difference. In other words, what is implied is that the basis of association and dissociation should be belief and disbelief. It should not be

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9. And that we do not know whether any ill has been intended for those on earth or whether their Lord has intended something good for them.

10. And that there are pious among us also and some who are otherwise; our paths are separate.

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bias for one's tribe or nation.

This statement of the jinn is actually a declaration of acquittal from their nation, which, even after their calls to accept faith, remained adamant on its disbelief and polytheism. Such a declaration was made by all prophets of God before their respective nations and the righteous of all periods of time, while following these prophets, also made such a declaration. Prominent examples of this were the companions of the cave mentioned in Sūrah al-Kahf.

The word طَرَآئِقَ means "paths" and "schools of thought" and قِدَدًا means "different" and "separate."

وَّاَنَّا ظَنَنَّاۤ اَنْ لَّنْ نُّعْجِزَ اللّٰهَ فِی الْاَرْضِ وَلَنْ نُّعْجِزَهٗ هَرَبًا ﴿۱۲﴾[11]

After calling their people to the truth, these words sound a warning to their people: it has also become evident to them that they are always in the grasp of God; He can seize them at any time.

In this verse, some words are suppressed on the basis of the well-known linguistic principle of parallelism. These suppressed words can be understood through the sentence structure of the verse itself. For example, in the first part of the verse, the presence of the word فِی الْاَرْضِ points to the suppression of فِی السَّمَاء in the second part. Similarly, the presence of the word هَرَبًا in the second part, points to the suppression of its counterpart in the first part. I have unveiled all these suppressions in the translation of the verse. Since this style is not common in Urdu,[12] the real meaning of the verse cannot be understood unless these instances of suppression are unfolded.

وَّاَنَّا لَمَّا سَمِعْنَا الْهُدٰۤی اٰمَنَّا بِهٖ ؕ فَمَنْ یُّؤْمِنْۢ بِرَبِّهٖ فَلَا یَخَافُ بَخْسًا وَّلَا رَهَقًا ﴿۱۳﴾[13]

In this verse, these jinn have presented their own example before their people regarding accepting the truth when it came their way. They thought that it was mandatory upon them to recognize the truth and so they professed faith in it. The implication is that this very attitude should be adopted by all those who have regard for the truth. The evasion of those who run away from it will bear witness that instead of following reason they wanted to follow their desires.

In the expression فَلَا یَخَافُ بَخْسًا وَّلَا رَهَقًا the word بَخْسٌ means " to reduce" and the word رَهَقٌ, as explained earlier, means "to be unfair." This subject is also discussed with slight variation of words in فَلَا یَخٰفُ ظُلْمًا وَّلَا هَضْمًا (۲۰:۱۱۲) (so they shall fear neither wrong

11. And that we acknowledge that we cannot escape God's grasp by setting off to some place in this earth or by running away somewhere in the heavens.

12. The case of English is no different. (*Translator*)

13. And that when we heard words of guidance we believed in it. So he who believes in his God their Lord will have no fear of any loss or any injustice.

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nor injustice, (20:112)).

By these words, they have encouraged people who have accepted the call to embrace faith: whoever will do so should rest assured that this deal will procure no loss. The Almighty will reward them abundantly for their deeds. They should neither fear usurpation of some right nor any injustice. Whatever a person would have done will only come before him. In Sūrah al-Zilzāl, the words used are:

فَمَنْ يَّعْمَلْ مِثْقَالَ ذَرَّةٍ خَيْرًا يَّرَهٗ. وَمَنْ يَّعْمَلْ مِثْقَالَ ذَرَّةٍ شَرًّا يَّرَهٗ. (٩٩:٧-٨)

Then whoever has done the smallest bit of good will see it, and whoever has done the smallest bit of evil will also see it. (99:7-8))

وَّاَنَّا مِنَّا الْمُسْلِمُوْنَ وَمِنَّا الْقٰسِطُوْنَ ؕ فَمَنْ اَسْلَمَ فَاُولٰٓئِكَ تَحَرَّوْا رَشَدًا ﴿١٤﴾ وَ اَمَّا الْقٰسِطُوْنَ فَكَانُوْا لِجَهَنَّمَ حَطَبًا ﴿١٥﴾[14]

In this verse, the jinn are expressing the fact that since the Almighty has given them innate awareness of good and evil, has also explained to them good and evil through His Books and, as a fact of life, they are also witnessing that both types of people – obedient and disobedient – are found among them, then a natural consequence of all this is that the Almighty should not regard both these categories to be equal; in fact, those who remain obedient to Him should be worthy of Paradise and those who deviate from the truth should become the firewood of Hell. Making a distinction between good and evil is an obvious requirement of the Almighty's justice and wisdom. If this is not so, then this would mean that this world is an unattended lot whose creator regards good and evil to be equal.

وَّاَنْ لَّوِ اسْتَقَامُوْا عَلَى الطَّرِيْقَةِ لَاَسْقَيْنٰهُمْ مَّآءً غَدَقًا ﴿١٦﴾[15]

After the impressions and statements of the jinn, from here the discourse has shifted directly towards the Quraysh. I have already written while explaining the word قُلْ of the first verse of this *sūrah* that, by this word, the Prophet (sws) has been directed to communicate these views of the jinn regarding the Qur'ān and its message to the conceited and arrogant leaders of the Quraysh. After this, the Quraysh are now being directly admonished that if they had remained steadfast on the straight path, then this would not have been a loss-incurring deed; it was a very lucrative deal for them both in this world and the Hereafter. The Almighty would have blessed them with abundant rain. The words مَآءً غَدَقٌ literally mean "abundant water;" however, in Arabic it

14. And that there are obedient among us and also disobedient; so those who are obedient will find themselves on the right path and those who are disobedient will become the firewood of Hell.'"

15. And it has also been revealed to me that if these [Quraysh] had adhered to the straight path, We would have bestowed on them rain in abundance.

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connotes abundance in resources and provisions. Examples of this usage can be seen in the previous *sūrahs*. In Sūrah Nūḥ, the words used are:

اسْتَغْفِرُوْا رَبَّكُمْ ؕ اِنَّهٗ كَانَ غَفَّارًا. يُّرْسِلِ السَّمَآءَ عَلَيْكُمْ مِّدْرَارًا. وَّ يُمْدِدْكُمْ بِاَمْوَالٍ وَّ بَنِيْنَ وَ يَجْعَلْ لَّكُمْ جَنّٰتٍ وَّ يَجْعَلْ لَّكُمْ اَنْهٰرًا. (۷۱: ۱۰-۱۲)

Seek forgiveness from your Lord; indeed, He is ever Forgiving; He shall send down on you abundant rain from the heavens and shall strengthen you with wealth and sons and shall make for you gardens and shall bring forth for you springs of water. (71:10-12)

The verse under discussion actually dispels the misperception of the Quraysh according to which they would attribute their affluence to their deities and would fear that if they accept the calls of the Qur'ān, they would be deprived of the wealth and children they have been blessed with. The implication of the verse is that it is naïve on their part to attribute this affluence to their alleged deities. All favours are the blessing of God and if in spite of their ungrateful attitude He has still not taken away these favours from them, then if they show gratitude, He will not only make them remain its recipients, He will also increase these favours.

The words عَلَى الطَّرِيْقَةِ refer to the straight path of *tawḥīd*. It is mentioned as if it is a well known path. It is a reality and hence human nature bears witness to it, human intellect alludes to it and the prophets and books of God have also called people towards this path.

لِنَفْتِنَهُمْ فِيْهِ ؕ وَمَنْ يُّعْرِضْ عَنْ ذِكْرِ رَبِّهٖ يَسْلُكْهُ عَذَابًا صَعَدًا ﴿۱۷﴾[16]

This is an on the spot admonition on a misconception that may arise. If the Almighty blesses someone with riches and affluence in this world, then he should not be misled by this act of benevolence and regard himself to be a favourite creature of God. The real purpose for this bestowal is to test that person, whether he becomes grateful and obedient to the Almighty after receiving these favours or ends up as an ingrate and conceited person. The implication of this verse is that these conceited leaders of the Quraysh have forgotten this obvious reality; they regard these favours to be their right which they have inherited from their forefathers; inebriated with conceit and pride, they show aversion to this Reminder which the Almighty had revealed to them to guide them to the right path.

The words وَمَنْ يُّعْرِضْ عَنْ ذِكْرِ رَبِّهٖ يَسْلُكْهُ عَذَابًا صَعَدًا sound a second admonition to the leaders of the Quraysh that those who evade the reminder of their Lord by showing conceit on

16. So that We could test them by this, and those who turn away from the Reminder of their Lord, He will put them through an ever-increasing torment.

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their worldly affluence should remember that the Almighty will cast them into an ever-increasing torment.

The word ذِكْر refers to the Qur'ān on the lack of recognition of which the Quraysh have been condemned earlier. This word is used to refer to the Qur'ān in many verses.

The expression عَذَابًا صَعَدًا has generally been translated as "extreme torment." However, the real meaning of صَعَدًا is "to increase." For this reason, I am inclined to think that the punishment of those whom the Almighty seizes because of the rejection of His prophet and Book is not transient; it is ever-increasing. They will have to face a much greater punishment in the Hereafter than the punishment they face in this world and then they will be made to pass through an ever-increasing torment. Never will it end nor gradually lessen.

وَّاَنَّ الْمَسٰجِدَ لِلّٰهِ فَلَا تَدْعُوْا مَعَ اللّٰهِ اَحَدًا ﴿١٨﴾[17]

In the previous verse, the address of the discourse was not direct. In this verse, the Quraysh are directly addressed and warned of the sanctity a mosque has in which no one but God is worshipped. This is a reminder of the belief of *tawḥīd* which is part of the warning found in the previous verse. The implication is that, when the Almighty will seize those who have turned away from His reminder, these alleged deities will not be able to save them; hence the Quraysh should not contaminate the mosque by worshipping them.

Since it is only the Almighty Who is worthy of being worshipped and no one else has this prerogative so mosques are reserved for God only as per the very purpose of building them. Neither can a mosque be built for someone other than God nor can someone other than Him be worshipped in it.

Here, the word مَسٰجِدَ (mosques) is not specified; however, since the addressees of this verse are the Quraysh, there is a strong indication that it refers to the Baytullāh. It is signified by a plural word because it is the direction in which all other mosques are built and in fact knits these mosques together and secondly because it refers to all mosques. This style is adopted in مَا كَانَ لِلْمُشْرِكِيْنَ اَنْ يَّعْمُرُوْا مَسٰجِدَ اللّٰهِ. (٩:١٧) Here too the word connotes the Baytullāh; however, to let it remain a general directive, a plural word is used.

وَّاَنَّهٗ لَمَّا قَامَ عَبْدُ اللّٰهِ يَدْعُوْهُ كَادُوْا يَكُوْنُوْنَ عَلَيْهِ لِبَدًا ﴿١٩﴾[18]

It was only befitting that in the Baytullāh no one else's name be invoked other than that of the Almighty; on the contrary, when the Prophet (sws) stands up to worship the

17. And that mosques are only for the worship of God so invoke not any one with God.

18. And that when this servant of God stands to invoke only Him, it seems as if they will rush upon him.

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Almighty only, his opponents surround him from all sides.

The word لِبَدًا is the plural of لِبْدَةٌ which means something which is intertwined or something which is multi-layered. This verse depicts the fact that the concept of *tawḥīd* has become alien in the very house that was built for the worship of the one and only God; when a servant of God stands to worship Him in it and recites *sūrahs* which contain the pure teachings of *tawḥīd*, people regard him to be an alien or a mad person and encircle him from all sides. Precisely the same situation arises when he goes out to preach and recite before them the *sūrahs* which are based on *tawḥīd.* At that time also, some miscreants besiege him and try to harass and humiliate him.

The expression عَبْدُ اللّٰهِ refers to the Prophet (sws). The expression reflects affection as well as the reality that the most natural and logical attitude of a servant of God is to invoke God alone; however the conscience of some people has become so perverted that the highest and noblest of deeds has become alien and aversive to them.

قُلْ اِنَّمَآ اَدْعُوْا رَبِّيْ وَلَآ اُشْرِكُ بِهٖٓ اَحَدًا ﴿٢٠﴾[19]

These verses guide the Prophet (sws) that however much these people should oppose him and express disgust, he should not care about them and clearly tell them that he will invoke God alone and not ascribe partners to Him, even though they might regard these partners to have a great share in this partnership with God.

قُلْ اِنِّيْ لَآ اَمْلِكُ لَكُمْ ضَرًّا وَّلَا رَشَدًا ﴿٢١﴾[20]

The Prophet (sws) is asked to convey to his opponents that if they feel an aversion to his message and they are not even ready to hear him out, then he has no remedy for them; he has been sent as one who invites people to the truth and not one who makes them forcibly accept it. Neither is their harm or benefit under his control nor can he provide guidance to them or lead them astray; his only responsibility is to deliver the word of God and that is what he is doing; he has no further obligation. Here, the unique style of the Qur'ān may be noted that because of parallelism after ضَرًّا the word نَفْعًا is suppressed and after رَشَدًا, the word غَيًّا is suppressed.

قُلْ اِنِّيْ لَنْ يُّجِيْرَنِيْ مِنَ اللّٰهِ اَحَدٌ ۙ وَّلَنْ اَجِدَ مِنْ دُوْنِهٖ مُلْتَحَدًا ﴿٢٢﴾[21]

This is a further explanation of what is said in the previous verse. The Prophet (sws) is told to inform his adversaries that if while trying to pamper them or being over-awed by them, he succumbs to associating someone with God then this would be imputing falsehood to God which is the greatest crime. He should also inform them

19. Tell them: "I invoke my Lord only and will not associate partners with Him."
20. Tell them: "I have no authority to harm or benefit."
21. Tell them: "None can protect me from God nor can I find any refuge besides Him."

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that such is the punishment of this crime that no one will be able to give him refuge and asylum from the wrath of God.

اِلَّا بَلٰغًا مِّنَ اللّٰهِ وَرِسٰلٰتِهٖ ؕ وَمَنْ يَّعْصِ اللّٰهَ وَرَسُوْلَهٗ فَاِنَّ لَهٗ نَارَ جَهَنَّمَ خٰلِدِيْنَ فِيْهَآ اَبَدًا ﴿۲۳﴾[22]

This verse relates to verse 21 above. The implication of the verse is that the Prophet (sws) can neither bring about the promised punishment at their demand nor forcibly guide them; his responsibility is only to communicate the message of God with full integrity of contents and to inform them of all the directives of God.

The word رِسٰلٰتِهٖ (His messages) is connected to بَلٰغًا (to inform). After بَلَاغٌ the purpose of addition of this word is to show that the responsibility of the Prophet (sws) is only to communicate the message of God in its exact form; apart from this communication, he can neither guide them nor lead them astray and he also does not have the authority to alter the directives of God in the slightest way for their pleasure.

The words وَمَنْ يَّعْصِ اللّٰهَ وَرَسُوْلَهٗ فَاِنَّ لَهٗ نَارَ جَهَنَّمَ خٰلِدِيْنَ فِيْهَآ اَبَدًا express the fact that the Prophet (sws) is asked to tell them that after this communication he would have discharged his obligation. After this, those who remain adamant in disobeying God and His Prophet (sws) should remember that for them is the fire of Hell in which they will dwell forever.

حَتّٰٓى اِذَا رَاَوْا مَا يُوْعَدُوْنَ فَسَيَعْلَمُوْنَ مَنْ اَضْعَفُ نَاصِرًا وَّاَقَلُّ عَدَدًا ﴿۲۴﴾[23]

The implication is that today these people are very proud of their power but when they will see the promised punishment, they will realize whether it is they who are frail and weak or the Prophet of God whose warnings they never gave any importance.

The words مَا يُوْعَدُوْنَ (what they are being warned) encompass the punishment which is necessarily faced in this world by people who reject their prophet, as well as the punishment which they will face in the Hereafter. Verse 25 of the previous *sūrah*, Sūrah Nūh also discusses this aspect.

قُلْ اِنْ اَدْرِيْٓ اَقَرِيْبٌ مَّا تُوْعَدُوْنَ اَمْ يَجْعَلُ لَهٗ رَبِّيْٓ اَمَدًا ﴿۲۵﴾[24]

The opponents of the Prophet (sws) wanted to hasten the punishment which he was promising them and to pester him would inquire about the time of its arrival. In this verse, he is asked to inform such people that he has been sent only to inform people of

22. Only to inform you from God and to communicate His messages to you. And those who disobey God and His Prophet shall abide forever in the fire of Hell.

23. Until these people behold that what they are being warned of; then they shall know who is the weakest in help and who is the fewest in numbers.

24. Tell them: "I do not know whether that with which you are being threatened is imminent or whether My Lord will postpone it a little more."

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its arrival; the exact time of its arrival is not known to him; it could be imminent and it could have been deferred by the Almighty.

عٰلِمُ الْغَيْبِ فَلَا يُظْهِرُ عَلٰى غَيْبِهٖٓ اَحَدًا ﴿٢٦﴾[25]

There are certain facts of the unknown that are known only to God. The words عَلٰى غَيْبِهٖ does not refer to each and every fact of the unknown; it refers to those facts whose knowledge rests only with Him. For example, the time of the punishment of the Hereafter is only known to Him. He does not disclose such facts even to his angels and prophets.

اِلَّا مَنِ ارْتَضٰى مِنْ رَّسُوْلٍ فَاِنَّهٗ يَسْلُكُ مِنْۢ بَيْنِ يَدَيْهِ وَمِنْ خَلْفِهٖ رَصَدًا ﴿٢٧﴾ لِّيَعْلَمَ اَنْ قَدْ اَبْلَغُوْا رِسٰلٰتِ رَبِّهِمْ وَاَحَاطَ بِمَا لَدَيْهِمْ وَاَحْصٰى كُلَّ شَيْءٍ عَدَدًا ﴿٢٨﴾[26]

The implication of these verses is that it is not necessary that the Almighty inform his prophets whom He selects for this position of all the facts of the unknown world. It is not necessary for them to be aware of all such facts if they are to discharge their responsibility as prophets. However, the Almighty does guard them from all sides to see if they have faithfully delivered His directives.

The exception connoted by the particle اِلَّا can be understood if the following verse of Sūrah al-Ghāshiyah is kept in consideration:

فَذَكِّرْ ؕ اِنَّمَآ اَنْتَ مُذَكِّرٌ. لَسْتَ عَلَيْهِمْ بِمُصَيْطِرٍ. اِلَّا مَنْ تَوَلّٰى وَكَفَرَ. فَيُعَذِّبُهُ اللّٰهُ الْعَذَابَ الْاَكْبَرَ. (٨٨: ٢١-٢٤)

Just remind them, for your duty is only to remind them; you are not to force them. As for he who turns away and denies, God will punish him gravely. (88:21-24)

In technical terms, such an exception is called the severed exception (*istithnā munqaṭa'*); it is independent of the previous clause from which it seemingly creates an exception and is explained by an enunciative (*khabr*) which follows it.

The word يَعْلَمَ is in the same meaning as in نَعْلَمَ الْمُجٰهِدِيْنَ مِنْكُمْ. (٤٧: ٣١) and other verses of similar meaning. The word نَنْظُرَ is used in precisely this meaning in لِنَنْظُرَ كَيْفَ تَعْمَلُوْنَ (١٠: ١٤). The Almighty has knowledge of all things; however, He wants the inner-self of a person to be revealed and that He is able to test him.

The sentence وَاَحَاطَ بِمَا لَدَيْهِمْ وَاَحْصٰى كُلَّ شَيْءٍ عَدَدًا implies that the Almighty fully protects the

25. Only He knows the unknown, and He never reveals His unknown to anyone.

26. As for those whom He chooses as His messengers, He guards them from behind and from the front that He may know if they have delivered the messages of their Lord; and He surrounds them from all sides and keeps count of all their things.

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revelations He entrusts to His prophets and keeps count of every single thing He gives them. The smallest of things cannot escape this count.

With the help and grace of the Almighty, I come to the end of this *sūrah's* exegesis فالحمد لله على إحسانه (so gratitude be on His favour).

Raḥmānābād
20th October 1978 AD
17th Dhū al-Qa'dah 1398 AH

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